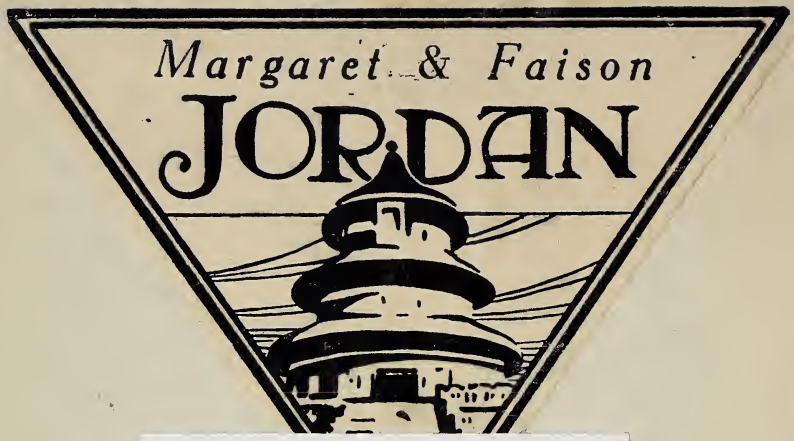

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MY FRIENDS, THE CHINESE

By the Same Author

FOUR HUNDRED MILLION CUSTOMERS
MASTER KUNG
I SPEAK FOR THE CHINESE

MY FRIENDS, THE CHINESE

by

CARL CROW

Decorations by

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PREFACE

THE greater part of this book was written in China two years ago when the country was enjoying the greatest measure of peace and prosperity it had known for a quarter of a century. It has been revised to the accompaniment of war in which hundreds of thousands have been killed and vast territories have fallen into the hands of enemy troops. But throughout the work of revision I have not thought it necessary to make any essential changes, for I believe the picture of the Chinese people is a permanent one.

This is not the first time that China has been over-run by foreign troops and parts of her territory put under alien rule. Nor is there any indication, to my mind, that the present invasion will have any more permanent effect than the former invasions on the lives and thoughts of the Chinese people. The present struggle is more desperate than the previous ones because mechanised warfare has made it so, and it has aroused more desperate efforts at resistance and brought to the surface a unity which has been surprising to the Chinese themselves.

There is a permanence about the life and institutions of China which has always made them the

eventual victors in every conflict with an invader. The Mongols, the Tartars and the Manchus all failed in the attempts to subjugate the country that they had nominally conquered because they were absorbed – not so much by superior numbers but by the more enduring Chinese culture. This influence of the Chinese on the people who live among them has not been confined to these uncultured tribes of the North. No one can live long in intimate contact with the Chinese without coming to act and think like them, to take on a likeness which is more than superficial. Even the British and American missionaries have not been able to escape this. There is a great deal of the Chinese in every one of them who has lived long in the country.

In this book I have tried to tell what I know of the Chinese mode of life and attitude of mind. I think much of it will be found to have survived when the war is ended and the Chinese peasants have returned to their farms.

CARL CROW.

MY FRIENDS, THE CHINESE

I

IF CONFUCIUS SHOULD RETURN

If the great Chinese sage Confucius were to return to earth and make a study of the progress of the world as reflected in any world atlas, he would find a good deal of cause for gratification. He would undoubtedly be pleased to note that the black-haired people

with light-brown eyes who constitute his native race make up fully one-fifth of the population of the globe, outnumbering by more than two to one any other racial group; and that they are fully the equal, mentally or physically, of any of the others and superior to a great many. Of the numerous races in existence when he was alive many have died out entirely, while none has thrived so well as the descendants of the comparatively small group of kinsmen and neighbours living on the banks of the Yellow River who survived him when he died in the fifth century B.C.

He might find some cause for tolerant and philosophical amusement in the fact that many other countries have spent a great deal of time, money and skill on preserving and prolonging human life by means of hospitals, doctors and various measures designed to safeguard the health of their people; but none is able to show such satisfactory survival as are shown by the descendants of the Yellow River people. His kinsmen have accomplished this without any of the artificial aids to health and longevity to which others appear to attach so much importance. Doctors were few and incompetent in his day and they have never been numerous nor well trained. No word for sanitation existed in his extensive vocabulary and it remained an unknown word until recently, and is now understood by but few. In fact from the time of the sage up to the present day it is probable that the insanitary conditions under which people lived grew

constantly worse as a natural consequence of the growth of population, which made the cities and villages more crowded. If this condition puzzled him, the ancient philosopher could turn to a living philosopher for an explanation.

In his description of the circumstances which lead to the highest physical and mental development of man, Dr. Alexis Carrel[1], no doubt unconsciously, paints a picture of conditions which have existed in China since the days of Confucius and have only recently been slightly modified. The Chinese has not been sheltered from the cold by steam heat, nor, indeed, by any kind of heat except that of the sun and his own body. Nor has he been sheltered from the heat of the sun by anything more efficient than the shade of a tree. His skin has been whipped by the rain and burned by the sun and bitten by the frost. He has survived illness with no help from hygiene, hospitals, doctors or nurses. As a general rule his meals have been abundant on feast days and special occasions and scanty at other times. He has gorged and he has fasted. He has not grown fat through over-eating because food has never been plentiful enough, and there have always been more fasts than feasts. He has adapted himself to take advantage of opportunities for long hours of sleep or to do without sleep and suffer no ill effects.

So far as physical comforts or lack of comforts go, Chinese have lived for more than fifty centuries and

[1] In *Man, the Unknown*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1935.

continue to live under conditions very much like those of pioneer families in America. They have little shelter from heat or cold, endure hard labour for long hours and often have empty stomachs. Like the pioneers they are strong, healthy and, also like them, they produce a large number of children. It has become conventional to attribute to filial piety the very high Chinese birth-rate and hence the huge population of the country, but the world over and throughout history, large families have been produced on the farms. For want of any more convincing example I may perhaps offer the record of my own family.

James Sharrock, according to the family tree which my mother compiled so carefully, was born in Liverpool in 1750 and when he died at the age of seventy-six his will named seven surviving children, one of whom, Timothy, was at the time fifty-one years old. Timothy married and was the father of ten children. His second son, also named Timothy, married and was also the father of ten children. It was in this generation that my grandfather was born and he was the father of eight children. All through the family records there is a history of constant migrations, from James Sharrock's original American home in New York to constantly receding frontiers, and in each generation consistent records of families which to-day would be considered phenomenal except in the few communities where Americans are still living as my ancestors lived. On the other side of the family the

record was about the same, though the Crows may have had the best of it.

Now in the production of this tremendous number of children my revered ancestors, most of whom were devout church-going Methodists, were neither spurred on by filial piety nor aided by concubines. It was the natural result of the mating of vigorous people who lived under the healthy, though perhaps uncomfortable, conditions of farm life just as nine-tenths of the Chinese live. Is it not reasonable to presume that similar conditions in China have produced similar results?

In all respects but one the Chinese fit into Dr. Carrel's picture of the conditions which lead to highest human development, and that is the repression of the sexual appetite. Not only is it not repressed in China but it is encouraged by the desire for sons. This has been glibly explained by many authorities as due to the tenets of filial piety which demand the existence of a son to carry out the worship at the family shrine. The same desire for sons is to be found in all farming communities. The farmer with many sons has an extra supply of cheap farm labour and so is in an economic position superior to that of his neighbour with only a few sons. The principal difference is in the matter of marriage customs. Under the highly individualised family system in America the boy who marries sets up his own family. Under the clan system of China the son is a permanent asset, for when he marries, he does not set up a new establishment. He

remains in the family and adds the labour of his bride. Perhaps it is this, rather than the idea of filial piety, which led to the encouragement of early marriages in China and to their discouragement in America.

Boys in China are, by paternal arrangement, married at a very early age and thereafter the raising of a large family often appears to be the principal object in life. In later life aphrodisiacs are in almost universal demand and, although the system has always been frowned upon, the wealthy supplement their ageing wives with young concubines. A famous war lord who flourished a decade ago is known to have maintained a harem of more than forty, including several Europeans. Chinese would find it difficult to consider anyone in his right mind who would suggest that, except for possible fidelity to the conventions of monogamous marriage, any restraint in such matters was desirable, either from the standpoint of health or morals.

Perhaps Dr. Carrel's hypothesis applies only to the well-being of the individual and not that of a nation, for any convention which would have resulted in the rearing of small families would long ago have resulted in the extinction of the Chinese race. The rate of mortality has been high, but the birth-rate has been higher and the margin of difference has meant an increase in population so steady and dependable that it has been possible to make up the losses caused by floods, famines and the appalling ravages of civil war. During the period of the American Civil War the great

Taiping Rebellion took place in China with a loss of 20,000,000 lives. In almost every generation since that time millions of lives have been lost by flood or famine and with no permanent effect on the total population.

The Chinese immigrant who is to be found in all parts of the world is almost invariably a petty retail tradesman living a sedentary life, and in his physical appearance he gives but little hint of the sturdy bodies of his farmer brothers. While the immigrant may not be a healthy animal according to the existing standards of modern science, he is a highly efficient human unit, works long hours over steaming wash-tubs, lives and sleeps in an unventilated room, but usually lives a long and useful life. He is cashing in on the physical reserve forces of his ancestors. Perhaps he is squandering them, but so far as the life of the native is concerned, that doesn't matter. For every Chinese laundryman who dies of tuberculosis ten thousand boy babies are born on Chinese farms.

It is not only among the countrymen of China that the superb physical equipment which is the common heritage of the race can be seen. In a book published just a century ago, that eminent authority on China, Sir John Davis, wrote:

'A finer shaped and more powerful race of men exist nowhere than the coolies and porters of Canton. Their freedom of dress gives a development of limbs that renders many of the Chinese models for statuary.'

One wonders what Sir John thought of the Northern Chinese whom he visited later, for the Cantonese are the smallest and scrawniest of their race and, according to some anthropologists, have in their blood some traces of the dwarf negrito of the Philippines.

The most noticeable difference between Chinese of the North and the South is to be found in their stature, which is apparent to the most casual observer. The difference, however, is not so great as it appears to be. A well-known sociologist, who apparently relied on his own observations, made the statement that the average height of the Northern man was a foot greater than that of the Southerners. It was a conclusion which a careless observer might reasonably come to, because in the North, there are a great many men who are quite noticeably tall and in the South an equally large number who are noticeably short, and in both cases those of medium stature go unnoticed. That this sociologist should come to conclusions from extremes rather than from averages is typical of the flimsy basis on which many conclusions regarding the Chinese have been formed. Scientific measurements of more than 5,000 male adult Chinese show that the average stature of those living in southern Kwantung is (omitting small decimals) five feet three inches, and those living in northern Chihli a fraction more than five foot six inches. The average Chinese stature is only a fraction of an inch shorter than the world average.

The long and successful struggle for physical survival in China, the hundreds of generations who have lived under a high state of civilisation, has developed bodies which are not only strong but possess many distinctive characteristics of beauty.

Dr. Hrdlcka says it is likely that in future men and women the hands and feet will be narrower and the fingers more slender. This development has already gone far enough with the Chinese to be observable to anyone. It is most noticeable in the hands of Chinese women, which are almost uniformly slender and beautiful. Among European and American women a really beautiful hand is a rare exception. The most beautiful of the highly-publicised Hollywood stars are well aware of this and rarely will any cinema scene betray them into a conspicuous display of their hands.

Among the better class Chinese women it is the ugly hand that is unusual. And beautiful hands are not confined to the upper brackets of the social scale. Quite a number of women of the poorer classes have the truly aristocratic type of hand. Very few American or European women have hands which will compare in beauty with the hands of the great Chinese actor, Dr. Mei Lan Fang. In fact many foreign ladies of wealth and culture might justifiably be envious of the tapering and shapely fingers of the average Shanghai bar boy. In other ways Chinese are equally well formed. It is rare to see one who is knock-kneed, bow-legged or pigeon-toed.

On the other hand there are a great many examples, including some very horrible ones, of individuals who by some unfortunate freak of nature have survived the selective process. It would be quite easy to secure in China a collection of human freaks and monstrosities which no other country could equal – dwarfs, giants, men with mouths on the sides of their faces.

After making a thorough study of the subject of the survival of the race, Dr. Smith, who spent a long lifetime in China, came to the rather startling conclusion that 'if the Chinese were to be preserved from the effects of wars, famines, pestilences and opium, and if they were to pay some attention to the laws of physiology and hygiene, and to be uniformly nourished with suitable food, there is reason to think that they alone would be adequate to occupy the principal part of the planet and more'.[1]

Many sociologists shudder to think of what may happen to the Chinese race if the present movements for sanitation, public health and child welfare reach the same proportions in China as in other countries, and the cruel selective process which nature has set up is disturbed. Instead of four hundred million people who are healthy and strong there may be twice that number who are sickly and weak. Or, again, the world may face the most serious problem of overpopulation that has yet confronted it.

Not only would the great Chinese sage, on this

[1] *Chinese Characteristics* by Dr. Smith. Fleming H. Revell.

imaginary return to his native land, find that his black-haired fellow-men had survived physically but that the philosophy of life which he and his colleagues had taught under such discouraging circumstances has also survived. After his death the followers of Buddha, Christ and Mohamet came to China and many Chinese embraced their teachings. Hundreds of magnificent Buddhist monasteries and thousands of shrines are scattered over the country. Christian chapels, churches, cathedrals, schools, dispensaries and hospitals are to be found in every port. There are millions of Chinese who face Mecca when they make their daily prayers, and thousands who have made the pilgrimage to the Mohammedan holy of holies. Every political theory, every philosophy, every social movement the world has ever known has been tried out in China.

She has been invaded and all or different parts of her territory ruled by almost a dozen different alien races.

The foreign religions, foreign philosophies and the alien rule have each contributed something to China and have taken nothing from her. She has yielded to all of these forces and been conquered by none of them. Perhaps this introduction of alien thought may have changed the shade of Chinese life, but it has not changed the colour. The resurrected Confucius would to-day find illiterate ricksha coolies and world famous authors and philosophers of his own nationality to whom he would still be a revered master, as he was to the faithful disciples with whom he lived and worked

in the days when Daniel made pacifists out of the lions.

He would probably, if he should see the present attempt to change the structure of Chinese life by means of military force, not be particularly distressed. He believed and taught that physical conquest was unimportant; that those who do not surrender their souls, their thoughts, and their ideals, as China never has, must survive.

II

COMPETITION SELF-RESTRAINED

After travelling about the interesting inland waterways of the now war-torn province of Kiangsu and Chekiang for more than a dozen years and meeting everywhere the most courteous hospitality, it was quite a shock to me to encounter for the first time what appeared to be the most cruel and callous disregard for the ordinary courtesies extended to travellers. After a whole day of it, with uniform rudeness from every boatman we met, I was about ready to conclude that I had been looking at the Chinese with rose-coloured spectacles and was preparing to change my opinion of them. We were on a houseboat trip from Changshu

to Wusih; none of us had ever made the trip before and neither had the *loadah* (houseboat skipper), though it was less than a hundred miles from his birthplace and he had been taking houseboating foreigners around the neighbourhood of Shanghai for twenty years.

This particular part of the trip was like a foreign country to him, for there is no one quite so helpless as a *loadah* in strange waters. We had anticipated something of the sort and as a precaution had provided ourselves with a collection of maps of the country and knew the exact compass direction we should follow. One member of the party had been an aviator in France during the war and we leaned rather heavily on him, feeling that anyone who could navigate an aeroplane should find it a very easy matter to guide a slow-moving houseboat through these peaceful waters. But we were confronted by a problem in which knowledge of aviation gave us no help. There were two parallel creeks on our route, one of which was the right one while the other was very decidedly the wrong one, for after miles of travel it would land us at a bridge too low for our boat to pass under and we would have to come all the way back again. We didn't know which creek was the right one and the map gave us no help. And we were anxious to get to Wusih without delay for the weather was hot and our ice was running short.

We left Changshu early in the morning and all day long as we met various boatmen we inquired from

them about the route. We didn't ask them to pilot us, or to give us sailing directions, but only to tell us whether we should take the northern or the southern creek. Although there was some variety in the way the replies were worded, and a good many witticisms on the part of the boatmen, they all came to the same thing, and that was that we could choose for ourselves. This was occasionally supplemented by the remark that only fools travel about in strange places where they do not know their way. No one gave us any information and fortunately no one with a perverted sense of humour gave us the wrong direction, which we certainly should have followed and so become the victims of a malicious practical joke. Eventually we took a chance and by sheer good luck hit the right creek.

This first experience with the inhospitable conduct of boatmen was soon followed by another. We were making a trip up the Chien Tang River and I wanted to include an excursion up a small tributary stream, the Feng Hsui, which a fellow-explorer had told me was very interesting. As soon as I proposed this the boatmen put up all manner of objections – the principal one being that the other river was too shallow for our craft. They suggested, and were quite insistent, that if we wanted to go up this river we should hire a smaller local boat, which we declined to do. We were very comfortable on our boat and knew there was nothing but nonsense in their objections, for our boat was so shallow that it would almost float in a mud puddle.

When I made a pretence of agreeing but said we would try it out and see just how far we could go, they had to give in, but they resented it and felt that I had taken a mean and unfair advantage of them. Chinese are always a little surprised when an American or other foreigner adopts their own tactics and accomplishes his purpose by evasion and indirection. We hadn't travelled far before they managed to find a mud bank on which the boat went aground, and so the trip was abandoned.

From later investigations I found that we could easily have travelled for miles up this beautiful little river, but that it would have been an act of trespass on the part of our craft which was supposed to confine itself to the main stream of the Chien Tang River and leave the navigation of the smaller tributary to the boats built and manned for that purpose by the local men. Then I understood this churlishness of the boat-

men around Changshu for we had also been trespassers there.

A great many, perhaps several dozen, different types of boats lie at anchor at Zahkou, the port which is the terminus of the Chien Tang River traffic. But as they travel up river towards their various destinations the various types of boats are sorted out into the different streams until the head of navigation in each is reached, and there it will be found that all the boats are of the same type and usually identical in every way. They are owned and operated by local men who look on the particular stream on which they live as their personal property and see to it that no one trespasses.

An arrangement similar to this is to be found on every river and creek in China and has been in operation for centuries. No conceivable legislation could work out a better system to prevent unfair distribution of employment and profits. While it is true that it gives to one locality, which usually means one family clan, a monopoly on the navigation rights of one river, the boatmen who enjoy this privilege are dealing with their own kinsmen and any attempt they might make to overcharge for freight or passage would be effectively dealt with. Tariff rates have been fixed and unchanged for a long time and I doubt if a question of this sort ever arises.

Freight is often paid for in produce so that fluctuation in market prices has little or no effect. The result of this is that China has the most complete

system of water-borne traffic to be found in any country, a system consisting of hundreds if not thousands of individual units each of which is self supporting and undisturbed by outside influences. China is said to have more boats than all the rest of the world put together, and, with the exception of a few provinces, every part of the country is covered by a network of navigable streams. It is because of this that the recent destruction of Chinese railways is not by any means such a serious matter as it would appear to be.

The system by which the merchant marine of China has been built up provides that each locality bear the burden of its own misfortunes and reap the benefit of its own prosperity. If one district suffers a famine or a flood and some of its boats are idle, these idle boats cannot become buccaneers of trade and upset the traffic in more prosperous districts. Thus a great many petty economic wars are averted, and in the midst of potentially fierce competition, business is carried on with a degree of tranquillity it would be difficult to match in any other part of the world. The boatmen are well aware of their rights and privileges and will stand for no trespassing. If a strange boat should attempt to land cargo, the intruder would be treated as a piratical enemy and the least that could be expected would be the confiscation of the cargo and the destruction of the boat. This is what our Chien Tang River boatmen were afraid of, for they had no business on the other stream. And the boatmen who

refused to tell us which creek to take to Wusih were following the old and sensible custom of refusing to give aid to an intruder and possible competitor.

Although no franchises are granted and there are few if any legal regulations, Chinese ferrymen, fishermen, beggars, itinerant showmen, pedlars, and those in many other vocations, each have certain areas of operation where they are as free from intrusion and competition as they would be if they were operating a trading monopoly under royal grant. There are hundreds of little ferries in all parts of the country but one will never find competing lines. They are usually one-man affairs, though in places there are a half-dozen or more boats each capable of carrying a score of passengers, but they are all owned by the same family. A story recently appeared in the Shanghai papers about a ferry line in Tientsin which had been in the ownership of the same family for more than 300 years. A century ago the ferry was of small importance and was probably a one-man affair. But with the growth of Tientsin as the principal market of North China, the ferry thrived and it is now an important enterprise with a big capital investment and giving employment to a great many men.

These ancient monopolies are respected by all. In Amoy there are three families of boatmen who have for generations had a monopoly of the ferry business. The original members of the three families were not natives of Amoy but came from some distant place, and

according to common report were formerly pirates. Whether or not that is true, they have been most piratical in the conduct of their ferry business. One of their favourite stratagems has been to get a Chinese passenger in midstream and then threaten to throw his belongings overboard unless paid a fare ten to twenty times the legal charge. Their practices have made the name of the Amoy boatmen a synonym for rascally tactics all up and down the China Coast.

Before the Japanese invasion of China put a stop to all such enterprises, Amoy was preparing to inaugurate a municipal ferry service which would eventually put the boatmen out of business. They richly deserve this fate and China is probably the only country in the world where it would be assumed that they have any rights which deserve to be respected. But the Amoy authorities worked out a scheme whereby a part of the earnings of the ferry service would be devoted to the retirement of the boatmen, a ten-year plan which would eventually involve the expenditure of several hundred thousand dollars. The fact that if an arrangement of this sort were not made, disgruntled boatmen would probably burn the ferries may have had its influence in causing the municipal authorities to come to this decision. Such an action on the part of the boatmen would have the support of public sentiment, for in China the right to make a living is a fundamental one and cannot lightly be destroyed.

No streams or lakes are more thoroughly fished than those of China, but the fishing rights to every square yard of water and to each of the many different methods of fishing are definitely allocated to some one particular family. The Wong family may have the right to fish a stream with cormorants. The Chings may lay shrimp traps and the Chows may enjoy the privilege of casting nets. Still a fourth may search the bottom of the creek for shell fish. Woe to anyone who attempts to upset this arrangement by fishing in water which belongs to others. He would be looked upon as a thief and would not only be attacked by the other fishermen but the whole community would be against him. No one fishes for fun in China and since every man with a rod and line would be looked on as a trespasser and poacher, angling is not likely to become a popular sport.

It is said that in Honolulu, which thrives on the tourist business, the spontaneous and apparently genuine welcome with which the visitor is received quite overwhelms him. Everyone shows him the natural beauties of the place and enlightens him about the climate. This keeps up without any lessening of ardour until the visitor should chance to remark that he likes the place so well that he has decided to make it his home and is looking for employment or thinking of setting up in business for himself. At once, it is said, the native hospitality cools. It is quite in order, and in fact highly commendable for him to come to Honolulu

and spend his money on hotel bills and postcards, but the idea of making his living there in competition with others who are already in the field is a horse of an entirely different and very unattractive colour. If he finally abandons his idea of becoming a permanent resident and decides to go back home, they speed his departure as warmly as they welcomed his arrival.

With certain modifications this is the Chinese attitude towards the visitor in any locality. They do not wait for the stranger to declare his intentions, but assume from the start that he has come with the object of making some profit out of the place and must be discouraged in every possible way. Chinese are not unlike other people in ascribing evil intentions to a real or potential competitor and when a stranger stays around a village the natives wonder what poisonous drug he is carrying about in his gourd. Confucius and many other Chinese philosophers taught that man's nature is inherently good; but almost every Chinese, while heartily agreeing with that theory as a theory, is not willing to go so far as to put the matter to the test of making it a hard and fast rule of conduct in dealing with his fellow-men. He may believe that he himself is inherently good as are, perhaps, some of his friends and relatives, but he is not willing to concede these virtues to a stranger, especially if this stranger comes from some different part of the country.

In a great many cities in America there are local Chambers of Commerce whose principal aim in life is

to increase the local census figures by inducing strangers to move to the place and make a livelihood there. Of the many American institutions which strike the intelligent Chinese as strange, this must appear to them to be the most unaccountable. Why, with life so hard anyway, should anyone want to make it more difficult by introducing more competition? There are innumerable trade guilds in China and a network of something more than 2,000 Chambers of Commerce, but the last thing any of these organisations in any city would think of doing would be to encourage an outsider to become a resident of the place. Everyone is familiar with the hostility which is displayed by people of California toward Japanese who attempt to establish themselves as residents. This is somewhat akin to the hostility displayed by Chinese towards their own nationals from other provinces who attempt to settle among them.

Yet in spite of this a great many Chinese are living and prospering in provinces far from those of their birth. The Cantonese shopkeeper who deals in odds and ends of foreign goods is so ubiquitous that this type of establishment is generally known throughout China as a 'Cantonese Shop'. That, however, is but another example of the way competition is restricted and divided into different small monopolies. For a long time Canton was the only port where ships could land cargoes and foreign traders were allowed to do business. This gave the Cantonese a monopoly on

foreign trade and it was only through the Cantonese that Chinese in other parts of the country could purchase imported goods. The official monopoly was ended about a century ago and other ports were thrown open to the foreign merchant, principally British and Americans. The Cantonese tried to maintain their monopoly but were only partially successful. The natives of every province now engage in foreign trade, but the business of selling the odds and ends of sundry goods still remains in Cantonese hands. It is only one of many occupational monopolies.

Thousands of trade guilds covering the business of dozens of different lines keep a tight grip on their membership and invoke swift and often ruthless punishment on anyone whose trading methods are adjudged to be unfair. Each guild has a code of business procedure which has been worked out as the result of many years of experience, in some cases the experience of centuries. Members of a guild present a solid front against outsiders and the officers afford a speedy trial and prompt judgment if any member is accused of using business methods which are injurious to others.

Though all Chinese shopkeepers are insistent that their prices are cheap, one rarely sees an advertisement of a bargain sale, for by lowering the standard price of goods, the profit of all the other shopkeepers would be upset. When something like this occurs the guild acts immediately. Usually a warning from the officers

is all that is necessary but if the merchant does not heed the warning, direct and violent action will be taken. He may find his shop invaded by crowds of thugs who will smash his furniture and make away with his goods. And he will not only receive no sympathy from the community, but the courts will pay little attention to his complaints. If he has violated the code and brought distress on his fellow-merchants, he deserves to suffer punishment and Chinese courts invariably uphold the guild.

With its overcrowded population the struggle for existence in China has always been desperate enough. One shudders to think what it would be were it not for these well balanced and effective restraints on competition which the Chinese have worked out for themselves without the aid of any legislative theories.

III

FORTY CENTURIES OF FARMING

CHINESE forests have been cut down, erosion has washed soil from the slopes of hills, many parts of the Yellow River valley have been covered by floods which left deposits of sand, and yet the fact remains that after forty centuries of constant cultivation, the farms of China are still productive and support the largest farming population on earth. The answer to this is the Chinese farmer's constant search for fertiliser. Every bit of refuse around the farm is thrown

into the compost heaps. In the winter the bottoms of canals and creeks are dredged and the rich black silt stored for deposit on the fields. The harvest of manure and the harvest of crops are carried on with equal care.

None of this valuable fertiliser is allowed to go to waste, but is put directly on the job of promoting the growth of plants. In Hupeh province I saw, a few years ago, a terraced hillside on which there was one plot so small that it supported only fourteen stalks of corn. A network of tiny irrigation canals an inch deep had been cut out of the soil so that with one dipperful of liquid manure, each of the fourteen plants would share the benefit. This is typical of the care every growing plant in China receives.

While the farmer gathers silt from the creeks and canals a basketful at a time, the bounteous Mother Yangtsze, at intervals of every few years, fertilises thousands of square miles for him. The floods destroy the small farmhouses and sometimes cause great loss of life, but when they subside there is left on the ground a fresh layer of rich silt, so that the few years following a flood are marked by bountiful crops. It is for this reason and not because of the yellow colour of the water that, in its upper reaches, the Yangtsze is known as "The River of Golden Sands". When a Chinese farmer who has been driven out by floods returns to his land, the first thing he does is to thrust his hands into the mud to see how deep a deposit has been left.

He is the person most directly affected by the flood and the last one to look on it as a calamity.

Some parts of China were crowded and the fertility of some farm lands began to be exhausted more than twenty centuries ago. Fertiliser was necessary and every available source was used. The most efficient, most dependable and most easily procurable supply came from the farmer's own bodies – a natural return to the soil of the fertility of which it had been robbed – and so the use of human manure became and still remains the mainstay of Chinese agriculture.

Until plumbers can devise some method of flushing a toilet so that the human fertiliser will not be sluiced into sewers where it is lost to the hungry soil that needs it so urgently, the development of the plumbing business in China will lag far behind any other modern industry. The congested population of big cities like Shanghai has led to the construction of apartment houses and this has necessitated the building of sewers and the installation of sanitary plumbing, but only the necessity of highly-developed city life will drive the Chinese to the use of what is known as sanitary plumbing. Its use does violence to the instincts of the Chinese, who have learned through sad experience that starvation follows exhaustion of the soil. Since almost all Chinese are at most only a few generations removed from the farm and all of them are farmers at heart, I feel sure that many who live in modern Shanghai apartments often flush a toilet with a feeling of guilt

and regret at the waste of fertiliser which would add to the production of a bean field or bring blooms to a flower garden.

When I was awake at daybreak in Shanghai there were several familiar sounds I always heard. One was the monotonous clang of a little gong with which a Buddhist nun marked her prostrations on her daily pilgrimage to Bubbling Well Temple, kneeling to the ground and reciting a prayer with every third step. Another was the concert of that glorious songster the *minah* who, except in rainy weather, always greeted the dawn from my willow trees and then flew away on his business of the day. The third was an inarticulate cry coming from the foreman of the ordure collectors warning poor householders, or the servants of wealthy, to place the night soil pails outside the door so that their contents could be collected. Before the sun was well up the collection would have been completed and before office desks in Shanghai were opened for the business of the day, farmers many miles distant were carrying well-filled buckets to their fields.

Indeed to a Chinese, with his love of the soil, and his faithful care of it, it is as absurd to provide sanitary plumbing for men as it would be to provide it for horses, pigs or chickens. It is even more absurd from a common sense point of view, for the supply of manure provided by humans is a great deal more valuable than that provided by the lesser animals. Its use is so important to the production of crops in China that if

by some modern mechanical miracle every home in China could be equipped with sanitary plumbing, and its use made compulsory, the following growing season would see a famine of such magnitude as to be inconceivable, for the crops would not grow without fertiliser and the greater part of the world's most numerous people would undoubtedly starve. So great a number of people would be affected that all the world's surplus grain could give them little relief.

This collection and disposal of human manure in China is carried on quite openly and frankly with no attempt to conceal its more nauseating aspects, except where such action has been influenced by foreigners. What might euphoniously be referred to as 'public comfort stations' in China are in every sense of the word public, for there is rarely any degree of privacy about them, although customs differ slightly in different provinces. In the beautiful province of Chekiang the only thing that could make these stations more public than they are would be the installation of flood lighting at night; but in Kiangsu province rather ineffective screens are sometimes used.

This frank exposure is intensely shocking to untravelled visitors, especially British and Americans, who appear to have entered what might be called the back-yard privy stage of civilisation and graduated into sanitary plumbing much earlier than any other people. When foreign ladies first come to China they are subject to almost daily embarrassments by these

indecent exposures. Those whose husbands are employed in China and so must remain, soon find themselves acclimatised, but many tourists with delicate sensibilities abandon their plans for an extensive visit to the country when they find that they must endure such sights.

About such intimate matters there are different customs in different places. When living in Tokyo I never got over a feeling of self-consciousness at having to use a public urinal with a Japanese woman squatting on each side of me. Japanese are even more casual than Chinese about matters of this sort, though with an eye to their very profitable tourist business they have carefully built up a special code of conduct for those who live near tourist centres. Even in the enclosure provided at Kyoto for visitors to the ceremony of the coronation of the Emperor, the entirely inadequate provision of public toilets did not allow for separation of the sexes and the long queues waiting outside were about equally divided between men and women. Such an arrangement would be unthinkable to a Chinese and a Chinese woman would commit suicide before entering a public toilet with men. In many years of residence in China I have never seen a Chinese woman lift her skirt or loosen the string of her trousers. These sights in Japan are so common as to pass unnoticed, as does the unattractive nudity of the Japanese women.

IV

FUEL FOR THE POTS OF CHINA

In most parts of China there is constant and toilsome search for fuel. Everything that can possibly generate a little heat for cooking is picked up and carried home for use in the kitchen stove. There are no private woodpiles in China because no one possesses enough wood to make a pile, and wood is too valuable a commodity to be piled up in such a way that a few sticks could easily be pilfered. Only in the mountains is

wood to be found in any abundance and even there none of it is allowed to go to waste. When I went home after an absence of ten years spent in China, one of the most amazing things to me was the vast amount of fire-wood scattered all about the country, much of it located where it could be easily carried away. I suppose I shall have to live at home a long time before it will be possible for me to see a useful log rotting by the roadside without wondering why someone does not cut it up for fuel.

These odds and ends of dead limbs and abandoned logs and odd bits of lumber would not be littering up the countryside very long if they were located in any part of China. A bundle of straw which is dropped on a village street will remain there only a few minutes before someone will pick it up and carry it home for fuel. We may be sure that if a bundle of straw is dropped, it is because of carelessness and not intent, for no one would sacrifice anything so valuable. An American missionary who lived a lifetime in the country is credited with having said that in China a straw seldom shows which way the wind blows because before the wind has had a chance to blow it, someone will have picked it up and carried it home. Everything that will burn suffers the same useful fate. The stalks of cotton, beans and other field crops are pulled up by the roots, dried and added to the heap of fuel in the farmhouse, or carried to the village and sold.

Even before the frost kills the summer vegetation

villagers cut and carry away the grass, weeds and small underbrush which covers the uncultivated hill lands of the country. Thus the hilly woodlands in the densely populated parts of China have, in the winter season, a neat and park-like appearance and the absence of underbrush makes the hills of China a paradise for the hiker. Fortunately the short hot flame produced by dried leaves and grass supplies the demand for kitchen fuel and so reduces the temptation to cut down the trees. Anyone travelling through the densely populated sections of Chekiang and Kiangsu must be impressed by the fact that the country is very well wooded. There are no forests, nor any extensive wood lots except in the hills, but in the flat farming country every individual plot has its clump of trees.

In the cities the search for fuel is just as intense as in the farm villages but it follows different lines. A great many piles of Oregon fir are driven into the mud foundations of Shanghai to support the huge office buildings, but every individual pile is stripped of its bark within a few minutes of being deposited on the building site. Around every building operation will be found groups of women and girls waiting to pick up any stray chip or splinter. Heaps of cinders are tediously sorted to garner any which have not been entirely consumed.

Very little of the fuel so laboriously gathered by the Chinese is used for heat because, except in the extreme north, homes are unheated. All the fuel is used for

the more essential purpose of cooking food, and in order to do that efficiently, a technique of cookery has been developed very different from that of other countries. Fires of dry grass, leaves and rubbish burn intensely but unsteadily no matter how carefully they are tended, and they soon burn out. It is necessary to get all the benefit possible out of the heat, and thick cooking pans would absorb entirely too much of it. The result is that the iron pots and pans are very thin, so that the food is cooked with the least possible loss of heat. The heavy iron pots of the British would find no sale in China – no matter how cheap the price might be. Of recent years a big business has been built up in the sale of aluminium cooking utensils, which are believed to require even less heat than the thinnest iron.

The necessity for conserving fuel has contributed to establishing the diet of the country. Rice, the staple food of the South, and noodles, the staple food of the North, can each be prepared in a minimum of time, fifteen minutes in the case of rice and only a little longer for noodles. As each is cooked by boiling, a steady heat is not necessary. Cabbage, spinach and other vegetables are cooked in the same way, so that while there are millions of cooking pots in the homes of China, there are no frying-pans or ovens. The small demand for food which is fried or baked is supplied by restaurants or public food shops. Both gas and electric cooking stoves have been on sale in China for a

number of years, but they are specially designed to accomplish but one thing – to bring water to the boil as quickly and cheaply as possible.

Chinese food is always thoroughly cooked, always wholesome, but prepared with no waste of fuel. Tastes in food have followed the law of supply rather than that of demand. In the Confucian period of the sixth

century B.C. game and fuel were plentiful and the people were meat eaters rather than vegetarians. Both game and fuel became scarce at the same time and for the same reason – the overpopulation of the country; and so the people became vegetarians by force of circumstance. If by some miracle pork, which is the favourite food of the country, should become so cheap and plentiful that everyone could afford it, it would not

make such a change in the Chinese diet as might be expected unless by some other miracle fuel should also become both plentiful and cheap. Everyone would want to eat pork but not everyone would be able to because the cooking of pork takes a longer time and requires heavier and more expensive cooking pots and a much greater use of fuel than are demanded by rice, cabbage and other vegetables.

The wood that is used for kindling to start a fire in the old-fashioned American stove would, in most cases, be sufficient to cook a day's food for a Chinese family. However, Chinese families do not eat home-cooked food in the sense that American families do, and China is the home of the caterer as well as of the delicatessen shop. In a great many families, the only cooking that is done is of rice and vegetables, the latter usually consisting of one of the many different forms of spinach or cabbage. This, with the brewing of a pot of tea, comprises all the kitchen activities in the poorer Chinese homes, as well as in many where a comparative degree of prosperity exists.

Bread, which is sometimes baked but usually steamed in a hundred attractive forms, is almost invariably bought from the food shops where quantity production makes it possible to sell at a profit but still come well under the costs of home production. Meat is also bought already cooked and in infinitesimal quantities. One may purchase one ounce of pork or a single chicken gizzard. Hot water can be produced much

cheaper in large quantities than by means of the family cooking pot, and the result is that all over the country will be found that curious institution – the hot water shop, selling hot water at varying degrees of temperature from tepid to boiling and at a varying scale of prices. These shops do a rushing business in the early morning hours when women throng them to get hot water for the morning bowl of rice and pot of tea.

This economy of fuel has led to the development of the most complete system of catering, which is one of China's major industries. Every noon thousands of baskets of food are delivered by Shanghai restaurants to office workers and usually at low prices. The Chinese menu contains very few dishes which cannot be kept warmed up for a few hours without losing their savour. These restaurants do not serve individual meals but send out baskets containing a generous portion of rice and an assortment of fish, meat, vegetables, pickles, etc., supposed to be sufficient for half a dozen people. In every office there are many small luncheon clubs served by these caterers. By old custom any rice that may be left over must be given to the beggars, so if any beggar in the business district is hungry, all he has to do is to wait until the coolies come to carry the food boxes back to the restaurant.

The travelling kitchen is to be found in every large city. It is the prototype in miniature of the old-fashioned American lunch wagon which travelled from place to place. Although the kitchen is complete with

food supplies, fuel, cutlery and dishes, it is carried about on the shoulders of the cook. Considering its small size it offers a rather wide variety of dishes. Some of them operate all night long and the proprietor makes his presence known by banging the wooden frame of his kitchen with a piece of bamboo. Often in the middle of the night a hungry Chinese hears this welcome sound and slips out of bed long enough to get a hot bowl of noodles.

The idea that the tenets of Buddhism were solely responsible for the vegetarian diet of the Chinese is, in my opinion, entirely wrong. There is a little of Buddhism in every Chinese, just as there is a little of the Christian in every American, and in the case of both nations there are a great many who are both sincere and devout, and a great many more who do not allow their religion to interfere with their personal pleasures and especially with their food. A Buddhist is supposed to maintain a lifetime of Lent so far as meat is concerned, and some of them do – but not very many. Dozens of times Chinese friends have told me of some Chinese who is a devout Buddhist, and have added : 'He never eats meat.' The emphasis which they place on this last statement is enough to indicate that the Buddhist who never eats meat is an exception, and reminds me of the wisecrack which flourished during the palmy days of Oscar Wilde :

'What! Never?'

'Well, hardly ever.'

Buddhism was established in India in the sixth century B.C. and spread slowly through different parts of the thickly populated East. In each country where it became established the supply of animal food was becoming scarcer. In China a certain measure of wild game preservation had been put into effect centuries before. The Buddhist prohibition as regards the eating of meat was the recognition of an economic fact. It is significant that it is, by all classes in China, including the Buddhists, considered much more sinful to eat beef than pork. No one has ever discovered any use for a pig except as food, but the ox is an indispensable beast of burden in the rice fields.

It must be because of this age-long search for fuel and its supreme importance that a Chinese gardener is so reluctant to prune a growing shrub or cut a diseased branch from a tree. Of more than a dozen gardeners I have employed from time to time, I have never known one who would do the least pruning except under my direct and specific orders. Shanghai gardens are full of privet and other shrubs which have grown into trees of monstrous size and of hideous aspect, but no Chinese gardener will touch them.

On the other hand there flourishes in China a class of thief I have never heard of as existing in any other part of the world. What his occupation is in the summer-time I have no idea, but with the arrival of cold weather he begins his depredations on the trees. His one piece of equipment is a long bamboo pole on

the end of which is affixed a stout and sharp steel hook. With this he roams the countryside and the back streets of cities, looking for limbs he can purloin. When the temperature drops below the freezing point, he works hard and reaps a rich harvest, for in freezing weather the green limbs are brittle and easily broken. It is because of these thieves that many of the trees of China have such a peculiar appearance, as all the lower branches have been broken away.

V

LABOUR WITHOUT THE ANCIENT CURSE

UNTIL they heard the story of the Garden of Eden, the idea that labour was a curse laid on man because of his ancestral sins had never occurred to the Chinese, nor has the orthodox Christian idea about labour gained very much headway in that land of unremitting industry. That a man should work is accepted as one of the laws of nature, and while it might not be looked on as a blessing, neither is it regarded as a curse, and it is accepted cheerfully. All that is asked is that labour, which is principally agricultural, be productive. Except for a very small class of idle rich all Chinese work patiently and industriously, though with no intemperate bursts of energy, for no one would ever call them a people of strenuous habits.

But what they may lack in the way of strenuous

endeavour they make up for in unremitting labour. If it is true that the devil can only find work for idle hands, then China must be a place of very limited Satanic opportunities. It is significant of the Chinese respect for industry and aversion to indolence that the term 'loafer' is one which is expressive of the greatest contempt. It is the term which is universally applied to petty thieves, and anyone who is not at work and is not a professional beggar is presumed to be a thief and a rascal. This general condemnation does not, of course, apply to the scholarly loafer who makes peace with his soul by loitering about a waterfall or watching the sway of the bamboos in the breeze.

Figures showing the long hours put in by Chinese labourers horrify the reader but not the local resident who sees the labour performed, for long hours of employment do not, by any means, imply long hours of toil. Carpenters building a house or a boat may start work at sunrise and keep on hammering, sawing and chiselling until dark. But in the meantime, if anything interesting should happen in the neighbourhood such as a dog fight or the visit of foreigners, everyone stops work to look and make comments. Any time a worker wants to pause for the leisurely enjoyment of a pipe or a cigarette, he feels at liberty to lay down his tools without asking anyone's permission.

During the seasons of rice planting and rice harvest there is little time for a pipe or a cigarette and everyone is in the fields before sunrise and hard at work so long

as it is light enough to see. But no one who has witnessed one of these seasons can think of them as representing arduous toil. They are joyous community parties to be lived to the utmost while they last and to be talked over for months afterwards. There are plenty of volunteers who work for the fun and excitement and communal effort and this is doubtless as great an incentive to them as the huge bowls of steaming food which are always provided by the farmer at seasons of planting and harvest.

In a great many parts of China two crops a year are raised and in some places three. The result is that his period of winter idleness is not so long as it is in America, nor are many Chinese farmers idle. Along the many canals they turn boatmen during the winter months and transport to their fields the fertile mud which has accumulated on the bottoms of the canals. Younger sons of the family go to the big towns where they earn what they can by pulling rickshas or by other manual labour. The advent of winter also brings to big towns like Shanghai thousands of women and girls who scrub and wash and sew for their richer city sisters. In the Yangtsze Valley these annual migrations in search of winter employment extend no farther than the nearest big town, but in the northern provinces, and especially in Shantung, thousands take the long journey to Manchuria.

Those who remain on the farm are not idle, even when all farm operations have to be discontinued.

It is rare to find a farm home in which some form of local native industry is not being carried on during the winter. In several villages near Soochow, all the local residents spend their winters preparing the palm leaf fans which are sold by millions during the summer. In other villages of the same neighbourhood the principal work is the embroidering of the gaily coloured robes which were formerly worn by Chinese officials and are still in demand by actors. But the demand for this style of embroidery is passing and a new industry is taking its place. The villagers have learned to make the embroidery and put in the fine stitches the modern woman demands in her lingerie. This kind of work is not confined to the women, for the gnarled hands of the old farmer are often as skilful with the needle as with the hoe. Few things can offer a greater contrast than the dainty nightgown and the dirt floor of the hut in which it is being made by peasants who have never worn anything but the coarsest of homespun cotton.

Incidentally, it is worth while noting that it is only in the making of lingerie, laces, etc. that the cheap and skilful labour of the Chinese peasant has come to play any important part in foreign trade. In spite of very high protective duties and a recent period of depression which was supposed to play havoc with their buying power, Americans continue to buy these expensive and beautiful luxuries in very large quantities. It was in the making of dainty but dispensable gewgaws like this that the Japanese started on their

career of manufacturing which now embraces a myriad lines and has recently proved so upsetting to manufacturers in other countries.

In the rice-growing districts which embrace practically all of South China, the making of straw braid out of which hats are manufactured is a common winter industry. In Wusih and perhaps in other places there is a strange combination of vocations, for the watchman employed by a wealthy family is also the family tailor. His duties as a watchman are very light, for all he has to do is to keep an eye on the gate and see that no one gets in until he has been thoroughly cross-examined as to the nature of his business. In the long periods of idleness between the visits of callers, the watchman turns tailor and makes clothing for the family.

Knitting of woollen garments is a comparatively recent addition to the industries which provide useful employment for idle hands. Chinese appear to take to knitting quite naturally – perhaps because the knitting needles and the chop-sticks are so much alike both in appearance and in operation. A great many men are as expert as women at knitting. An elevator operator in an office building I formerly helped to occupy spent all his spare time knitting socks and made a good many extra dollars in the course of the year. It was a scrubby old building with few tenants, so there were few passengers and he had plenty of time to attend to his knitting. The owners finally demolished the old

structure and put up a fine big new building where I found my old friend, who was hardly recognisable in his handsome new uniform. I congratulated him on what appeared to be his advanced estate, but he was without enthusiasm. He was proud of the building and he had received an advance in pay to cover the cost of the uniforms, but in this new building people rode up and down so incessantly that there was no time for his knitting.

It is not only the poorer classes and the factory workers who put in long hours. All Chinese appear to take it for granted that life should be made up of labour and that they should be content with a minimum of leisure or with no leisure at all. The emperors of many dynasties set the country an example of industry by rising and holding court before daybreak and woe to the official who was not prompt in his attendance! Officials of importance usually held a number of concurrent posts and it was not at all extraordinary for an official to arise at three o'clock in order to be in time for the imperial audience, and find his day so crowded with engagements that he could not retire before 10 o'clock. As there were no Sundays to provide a day of rest it is no wonder that a great many officials literally worked themselves to death. More reasonable hours are observed by the officials of republican China, but long hours are the rule, with a health-breaking routine of early risings and midnight conferences. I don't think it would be an exaggeration

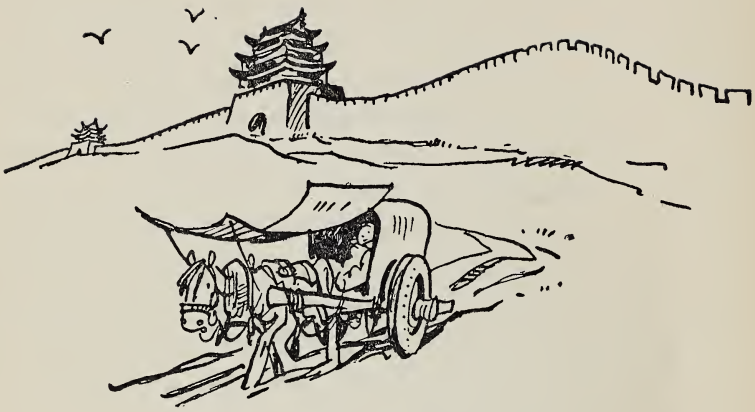
to say that nine-tenths of China is out of bed and at work by sunrise.

Most Chinese executives keep longer hours than their employees, for while the latter may rise with the dawn they go to bed with the dark, but the executive cannot do this. I know one owner of a small factory whose daily routine is to arise at six in the morning and work until eleven at night, and his case is not an unusual one. The idea that a business man should, as a matter of course, quit work at a certain fixed hour is strange to the Chinese, and has been accepted only by those who come into contact with foreigners and have learned their strange ways. It is not unusual for an out-of-town Chinese to arrive at a foreign office a few minutes before five o'clock for a conference which is likely to last for several hours and to be very much surprised when the foreigner, with a bridge date in mind, insists on postponing the conference to another day. No one can, in fact, ever feel free from the visits of Chinese with whom he is doing business. They may call on him at almost any hour of the day or night and it seldom occurs to them that the foreigner who is enjoying a quiet Sunday or holiday at home wouldn't appreciate an opportunity to talk a little business and perhaps put over a profitable deal.

Factory life of course has changed the picture but not to an alarming extent. In the first place, there are very few factory workers in China. Of all the millions of wage-earners less than one per cent actually

work in factories. In the second place, factory development did not start in China until it had run its course of oppression, inhumanity and reform in Western industrial countries and was started there under enlightened conditions which were undreamed of in America or England a century ago. When I was in Detroit a few years ago, I went through several motor-car factories where wages are the highest in the world. Shortly after returning to Shanghai I went through a Shanghai cotton mill where the wages are probably the lowest in the world. I could not help noticing the smiling, cheerful faces of the Chinese workers as compared with the tense unhappy faces of the Americans. This is an observation which will be scorned by the trained sociologist but it was satisfactory enough to be convincing to me.

VI



IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED

CHINESE do not give the appearance of being mentally agile. It is obviously with considerable difficulty that they change from one line of thought to another. The task in hand, even though it be a very trivial one, appears to occupy the Chinese mind to the exclusion of everything else. If a boy in the club is adding up an account, though the account be no more difficult than arriving at the total cost of one whisky and one soda, a sum which he computes a dozen times a day, his mind is so completely occupied with this undertaking that it is necessary to shout to him before

his attention is attracted and he may be given another problem involving the same familiar digits.

To change the subject of a conversation in China is not only impolite but very disconcerting to all concerned, for there is a noticeable lapse of time before the necessary mental readjustments are made and everyone has a complete understanding of what the new topic consists. This intense absorption often makes a Chinese deaf and blind to his surroundings and makes it possible for him to carry on the work he has in hand undisturbed by any excitement or clamour that may go on about him. They do not understand why we should demand quiet in order to think.

This is occasionally illustrated in very dramatic ways. Several years ago some linesmen were at work on the tops of telegraph poles in Hankow when a small battle broke out almost immediately below them. A good many shots were fired and several people were killed but the linesmen kept on at their work and paid no attention to the bloodshed. Foreigners who witnessed the incident were convinced that the linesmen actually did not hear the shots.

Associated with this concentration of mind is a perseverance, in small things as well as large, that often amounts to blind stubbornness. Many other people have single-track minds but in no others is the track longer or straighter. The inability of the Chinese to make quick mental changes keeps them resolutely on the course they have set for themselves.

In the days of the monarchy all official appointments were, in theory, made as the result of an elaborate civil service examination and it was the ambition of every student to pass one of the provincial examinations and thus gain fame and wealth as an official of the

state. The examinations were rigorous and there were many contestants, with the result that a very small proportion of the entrants ever achieved the coveted higher ranks. History is full of authentic stories of young men who entered these examinations as soon as they were old enough, failed to pass and

tried again and again at each of the triennial tests until finally, at the age of seventy or more, they would receive the coveted degree. Foreigners have been loud in their praise of these ambitious and persevering old greybeards but Chinese appear to have paid much less attention to them, apparently taking it for granted that once a young man has made up his mind to take a literary degree, nothing short of death should put an end to his efforts.

This perseverance in the matter of scholarship is duplicated in many other lines of activity and Chinese are not impatient for immediate results. It does not take any special ability to make plans for many years in advance but it does take courage and perseverance to stick to those plans, and these qualities of temper Chinese seem to have to a superlative degree. The making of plans which will take years, decades or centuries to mature is a mental task which Chinese attack with great interest and enthusiasm. In the feudal period of Chinese history, when many ambitious families sought to usurp the position of others, political schemes were worked out and pursued with energy though everyone concerned knew that they could not possibly come to fruition for several generations.

About fifteen years ago, a Chinese carpentry contractor whom I had known for a long time consulted me about a scheme to purchase a number of second-hand bicycles and rent them to British and American sailors who, when on shore leave, take a

passionate delight in riding either bicycles or horses. As I thought he was embarking on a very hazardous business enterprise, I attempted to warn him of its danger. I told him I didn't think that there was very much money to be made in renting bicycles and there was considerable risk involved because sailors of every nationality are notorious for their careless habits of sailing away and leaving unpaid bills behind.

He agreed that the bicycle rental business was not very attractive and said that the trucking business was really what he wanted to get into, but as he couldn't afford to buy a truck, he was starting with bicycles. As soon as he got his fleet of hire bicycles paid for he proposed to sell them and use the money for a first payment on a couple of motor-cycles with which his two younger brothers would start a quick delivery service for concerns which were not large enough to maintain their own. Then when the motor-cycles were paid for he would sell them and use the money as first payment on a truck. It was going to take a long time to accomplish this but he felt that his programme was a sound one, and events proved that he was right. One Sunday afternoon seven years later he drove into my garden with his truck and brought me a present of a pet monkey.

It may be that their disregard of time helps the Chinese to undertake long and tedious tasks, the very thought of which would drive the average foreigner to distraction. A Shanghai printer once delivered to me

100,000 Chinese booklets in which there was a minor but very serious typographical error. In etching the plates from which the booklets were printed, two small dots had been lost from a Chinese character, completely changing its meaning. Our client was in a hurry for the booklets and the printers naturally didn't want to suffer the loss of reprinting the entire job. There was a half-day of worry and then the problem was solved in a typically Chinese way.

The printer employed a number of clerks who opened up each one of the 100,000 booklets and inked in the missing dots so neatly that no one would suspect the fact that a typographical error was being covered. I thought it would be quite sufficient if we inspected every hundredth booklet and that if we found all these to be satisfactory we would assume that the whole lot had been corrected. My Chinese staff over-ruled me in this matter for they argued that if a single copy of the booklet with the error should happen to fall into the hands of our client, he would naturally assume that all were like that, so we made a careful inspection of each of the 100,000 booklets, finding that the correction had been perfectly made in all.

In some prisons in England and America those unfortunates who are sentenced to what is termed 'hard labour' are given the task of carrying heavy stones from one side of the prison yard to the other. When all the stones have been moved to one side the prisoners are set to work moving them back again.

This goes on day after day, month after month and year after year. The monotony of the task, it is said, causes intense mental suffering which sometimes leads to mental derangement. I feel quite sure that if a Chinese were subject to this form of punishment he might philosophically reflect on the futility of unproductive toil, but the monotony of the task would not have the slightest effect on him. One of their favourite stories is of a bird which picked up stones and threw them into the sea until the sea was full. The moral of the story is that this represents the spirit in which any work should be undertaken.

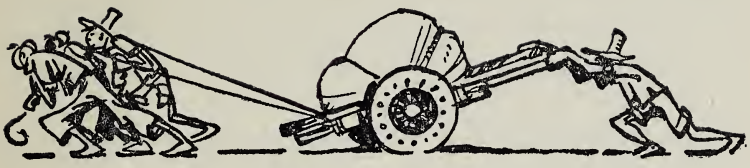
The flat lands around the delta of the Yangtsze River were formerly covered by water except at low tide, but each recurring high tide left a small residue of silt so that in time the land became a reed-covered marsh. As soon as this stage was reached, man began aiding the forces of nature in the work of adding to the area of tillable soil. Digging silt from the beds of creeks the farmers built up little patches of soil high enough above the water level to grow crops. Sometimes they embarked on much more ambitious schemes and dug canals not only for the convenient means of transportation the canals would provide, but also because the earth which was removed would add to the area of farm land. Once the canals were dug they provided depots for the collection of additional silt which replenished the fertility of the fields and raised them still higher above the water level.

No one can say when this work started but it was under way during the Confucian period of the Sixth Century B.C., and may have been begun several thousand years before that. Anyone who travels about this part of China can see the work still going on. The silt from the creeks and canals is carefully dredged and spread on the fields where it not only adds to their fertility but to their elevation above the high tide water level. The annual increase in elevation is so slight as to be imperceptible but during the course of the centuries hundreds of square miles of land which was formerly under water at high tide is now a good five or six feet above. When you consider that this was accomplished by means of individual baskets of silt carried one at a time, the raising of this land to its present elevation becomes an accomplishment of human labour beside which all others appear trivial.

The many waterways around the northern shores of Hangchow Bay afford another striking and even more interesting example of the indomitable perseverance of the Chinese in overcoming natural obstacles. Anyone looking casually at the map of this part of China would quite naturally conclude that the northern coast of Hangchow Bay was a delta into which trickled many small streams from the Whangpoo River. But going down the Whangpoo in any direction from Shanghai one finds that he can get usually within a few hundred yards of the sea coast as represented by Hangchow Bay, and there all navigation ceases.

What happened was that a few thousand years ago a large part of the water from the Whangpoo flowed into Hangchow Bay through a delta much like that around the mouth of the Mississippi at New Orleans. This worked a hardship on two classes of people, the farmers who grew crops, and the so-called 'salt-farmers' who produced salt by the evaporation of the sea water. The rising tides which overflowed the tidelands spoiled them for cultivation. The fresh waters from the river interfered with the evaporation of the salt and as a result the two interested parties worked together and very successfully in an attempt to reverse the course of the river. Doubtless this started by damming up very small rivulets and thus making small areas of land free from this mixture of waters. Gradually the whole foreshore of the bay was raised so that now streams which rise a few hundred yards from the bay flow into the sea near Shanghai more than a hundred miles distant.

VII



THE TALENTED RICKSHA COOLIE

THE contradictoriness of the Chinese character is seen in many things, but is strikingly exemplified by the fact that they are at once the most narrowly provincial and the most broadly cosmopolitan of people. Their provincialism is firmly rooted in their love of the soil and especially the soil of their birthplace. A Cantonese who spends all of his life in Shanghai never ceases to look on himself as an alien, one who is temporarily residing in a strange place and who hopes to return to his homeland as soon as good fortune makes this possible. People from Fukien, Shantung and Szechuen, who, with the Cantonese, constitute the bulk of the migrants in China, have the same point of view. To return to the place of his birth is the homesick longing of almost every lad who sets out for strange parts, but while in other nations this homesickness lasts, at most, but a few years, a Chinese

never recovers. Until his dying day his native village with its mud walls, dirt floors, green rice fields and flowering pomegranates is the most admired and most beloved spot on earth. His children and even his grandchildren, no matter where they are born, assume that they are from the ancestral province and look on themselves as natives of a village they may never have seen.

The exile may live in a Shanghai skyscraper with steam heat, hot and cold running water and all the other appurtenances of modern physical comfort, but he is never able to overcome his nostalgia for his native village, makes no attempt to overcome it, and cleaves to his love of home as the most precious of his spiritual possessions. If he is approaching death, he goes to his home to die, if it is at all possible. Throughout Chinese history it has always been considered somewhat disgraceful to die anywhere but in one's own home – something akin to dying with one's boots on in other parts of the world. Every steamer en route to ports like Canton, Swatow or Amoy, usually carries at least one dying man who is using his last ounce of energy to get to his native place. The journey from Shanghai to Ningpo is a very short one, for steamers which sail at 5 o'clock in the afternoon land about twelve hours later, but I have on more than one occasion seen carried off the boat the corpse of a man who had died during the night – a resident of the Ningpo district who had failed in his desperate race with death.

If he dies abroad – even though it be in a distant foreign country – the body of a Chinese is usually shipped to his native place for burial. If he has left no funds the expenses will be met either by his family clan or his provincial guild or one of the numerous benevolent organisations which take care of the burial of the dead. These organisations are so numerous and so active that, despite her poverty, China has never had a Potter's field. No matter how long they live or how far they travel, Chinese do not recover from their homesickness and custom does not allow death to sever the ties which bind them to their native place. *La Paloma*, whose haunting strains tell the story of the heartaches of the homesick Moor, might quite appropriately be a Chinese song.

It is remarkable that in spite of this provincialism, which is but another name for love of home, Chinese should be so cosmopolitan in their ability to adapt themselves to changed conditions and surroundings and how quickly the rustic takes on metropolitan airs. This is as true of ignorant and illiterate coolies as of the highly educated provincial scholar. When during the winter months work is slack on the farms, thousands of boys migrate to the cities to pick up any work which can be done by strong but untrained muscles. They do all kinds of work, but it is as ricksha coolies that they come in closest contact with the complex modern life of a big city.

It is easy, among the ricksha pullers, to pick out the

green country boy who is terrified by tramcars, buses and motor-cars and looks at a traffic light as if he thought this red ball of fire might walk out of the signal tower and burn him to a cinder. For the first few days he is a menace to himself as well as to his fares. With pride in his strength he will take long strides and outrun all the more sophisticated pullers with but small regard for traffic rules and the dangers

of a crowded street, for his experience has been restricted to narrow country paths.

But in a few weeks he learns his job, the air of the country bumpkin disappears and in propelling a ricksha he adopts a sophisticated technique which will mean less work and more profits. He quits trying to establish a championship for speed and adjusts himself to short strides and a gait which he can maintain for a long period of time with the least effort to himself. He is not long dismayed by the peculiar merchandising problems which his business presents. He soon learns

that men are more liberal than women in the payment of fares and less likely to insist on unreasonably long journeys. He unerringly spots the tourist from whom he demands and often gets four or five times the legal fare. The uniform of American sailors of marine is of the greatest significance to him, for they cheerfully pay outrageously high fares, more particularly the sailors who are new to the port. If a group of them comes out of a bar the dozen ricksha coolies who have been awaiting this auspicious occasion pay no attention to any other possible fares until the sailors have selected their vehicles. In the social code of the ricksha coolie they take precedence over all others. British sailors rank next.

The ricksha coolie is generally looked on as a lowly beast of burden. I have known some high-minded tourists who would not ride in a ricksha because they would not be a party to the degradation of a fellow-man. Aside from capitalising on their own cheap and showy sentimentality, the only thing they accomplish is to deprive honest and hard-working coolies of a few urgently needed bowls of rice. The coolies themselves would be very much surprised to learn of this consideration for they suffer no complexes regarding the degradation of honest labour.

Doubtless American taxi-drivers look on themselves as vastly superior in every way to the coolie, but in the conduct of his business the latter is called upon to use more brains and initiative every day than are demanded

from any New York taxicab-driver in a month. With a very small amount of technical training, any Shanghai ricksha coolie would make a good taxi-driver, but there are few taxi-drivers who would make good ricksha coolies.

Very rarely does a Chinese have to confine himself to any one occupation in order to make a living and when necessity arises he is usually able to turn his hand to any one of several useful trades. The farmer becomes a seaman, the seaman becomes a cook, the cook becomes a chauffeur. The chauffeur, whose steering-wheel is an insignia of very highly paid employment, can, if necessity arises, become a farmer, a seaman or a cook. Or he might step into the higher brackets of employment by becoming a marine engineer.

Each of them becomes a merchant as soon as he scrapes up enough capital or establishes sufficient credit. And if he is lucky enough or capable enough to make a fortune, the coolie is able to adapt himself to wealth with much better grace than some other people I could mention. That is, in fact, a characteristic which I think the Chinese share with the Americans – that individuals are, with increasing prosperity, able to take on the social graces to which their wealth entitles them.

Machines have few terrors for the inexperienced Chinese and he oftens masters them by methods of his own. Ten years ago when I was conducting a daily

newspaper in Shanghai, I bought a fine new printing press which could print from rolls of paper instead of flat sheets. My hope that this press would take care of the prospective increase in circulation was completely justified, for the circulation of the paper and the capacity of the press always maintained a respectful distance from each other. As every printer knows, a press of this kind must be started slowly in order to avoid breaking the web of paper. At the advice of the press manufacturer and with his expert assistance, I bought a specially made motor which would start at snail's pace and finally build up to its maximum speed, when the press would produce 5,000 papers an hour, which is a lot of English language newspapers to print for a place like Shanghai. The press was also, at my insistence, equipped with a liberal number of emergency switches so that if the web broke, the machinery could be stopped before too much of the precious newsprint was spoiled.

Having a fondness for mechanical gadgets I was very proud of this equipment and after it had been running a couple of days and I was told that everything was in order, I took some friends out at press time to show them how it worked. I had very carefully explained how the press would start at a pace of say a hundred yards an hour and then by means of the very clever motor build up to a sprint of a hundred yards in ten seconds flat. The exhibition did not work out at all according to programme. To my

surprise the pressman threw the motor on at full speed and to my still greater surprise the press started very slowly and gradually picked up speed without breaking the web. Then I saw that the pressman had his foot on the driving pulley, thereby providing a simple but very effective method of slowing up the press. When a break occurred he merely put his foot down hard and stopped the press quicker than would have been possible with the expensive special switches which had been installed for that purpose. The press and motor have now been running for more than ten years, but the special equipment I had installed at such great expense has, so far as I know, never been used.

A Chinese is as adaptable physically as he is mentally. He will live comfortably and enjoy the best of health either in the heat of the tropics or in the frozen north. He appears to be equally at home on the equator or within the Arctic circle. He cannot, like the migrant hordes of other countries, merge imperceptibly into the human mass of an alien land, for his complexion and his slant eyes mark him as a member of another race. Until a few years ago his queue, which he never discarded, gave him an even more noticeable physical appearance. In spite of these handicaps, the Chinese is the world's most successful immigrant, has made a place for himself, earned a living and often amassed a fortune in almost every civilised country, and a few savage ones. The distant fields to which the Chinese have penetrated and the

success with which they have established themselves is indicated by the number of daily newspapers published in the Chinese language in different parts of the world. They are to be found in Siam, Singapore, Federated Malay States, Dutch East Indies, the Philippines, Hawaii, Jamaica, Mauritius and, of course, in many large American cities.

VIII

WHEN A POUND IS NOT A POUND

FOREIGNERS in daily contact with Chinese are continually exasperated at the lack of precision and accuracy on the part of practically all representatives of the race. This appears to extend to every phase of human activity or interest, from accuracy

and precision in a statement of fact to accuracy and precision in the making of a piece of furniture. Exasperated foreigners argue, with quite a show of logic, that the Chinese genius for tolerance is very highly developed because they have practised so much tolerance in dealing with themselves and excusing their own personal faults and failings that they are tolerant towards others as a matter of personal habit.

This carelessness of Chinese behaviour is especially noticeable in their indifference to time. If a Chinese who is unaccustomed to foreign ways has an appointment to call on you at, let us say, three o'clock, it is almost certain that he will not call at precisely that hour unless by accident, but he may call a little earlier, and it is practically certain that he will arrive before four o'clock. Now this is exasperating to the punctual foreigner but the reason is simple. Three o'clock does not mean to the unsophisticated Chinese the exact point when the hands of the clock stand at that hour but a more flexible term 'the third hour' which is any time during the period of sixty minutes before or sixty minutes after the clock strikes three. As the ancient Chinese system divided the day into twelve instead of twenty-four periods, this provides still further leeway and three o'clock might mean any time between one and five. The result is that when a Chinese arrives anywhere from a half-hour to an hour after the time you expected him, he is both pained and surprised if you should suggest that he has been late in keeping

his appointment. With his method of measuring time he has been quite reasonably punctual.

Railway, aeroplane and steamship schedules are changing the Chinese idea of time but they are not bound by it as are people in other lands. They do not speak of 'catching a train' as we do, for they literally do not 'catch' trains. Whereas Americans take a certain amount of pride in arriving at a station just in time to board the train, Chinese pursue a safer and more leisurely course. Some hours before the train is due to depart they go to the railway station where they patiently wait until the train arrives and they can get aboard. A good many amateur publishers have thought they had an opportunity to supply a long-felt want by publishing railway time-tables for China, but these ventures have always fallen flat because, of all publications, a time-table is probably the least interesting to a Chinese. If, by chance, a foreigner should know that a train on which he expected to travel was due to depart some time in the early afternoon and had no way of getting more accurate information without going to the railway station, he would be worried sick, but a situation like that would not bother a Chinese at all. He would simply go to the station at noon, settle himself comfortably and wait.

Almost all Chinese except the very poorest carry watches but the accuracy of their timepieces seldom forms the subject of conversation because so long as the

watch is within, let us say, five or ten minutes of the correct time, that is good enough for all practical purposes and there is nothing to talk about. Chinese see no more reason to boast about the accuracy of a watch than of a thermometer.

This indifference to time is of course one of the many characteristics which are passing. The increasing travel by boats, trains and aeroplanes was partly responsible for it. A second reason for a change has come with the interest in athletics which has been developed during the present decade. Student athletes now argue about split seconds in track meets. Their grandfathers were quite content to think of time as the interval between meals, the time it would take to smoke a pipe, or the hours of daylight.

Other factors are causing the Chinese to form a new evaluation of time and proving that indifference to the passing hours is not an ingrained trait of character. A British missionary who wrote about his life in China thirty years ago tells of an experience which was doubtless duplicated by every missionary (or anyone else for that matter) who ever built a house in the interior of China. The plans of the house were thoroughly discussed with the contractor and mutually understood, and the price agreed on and a day set for the work to begin. The missionary, full of impatience to see his house started, went to the building site and instead of seeing a crowd of workmen found the place deserted and nothing being done. He records that when

the builder was reproached, 'He smiles and looks amused that you should be in such a hurry. He cannot understand it, for the difference of a day or two, or a week even, is such a trivial matter in this land, that the Chinese are constantly wondering why a foreigner gets excited if a thing is not done at the precise time that has been agreed upon.' The British missionary who wrote of this experience thirty years ago came to the conclusion that the Chinese suffered from an incurable languor and that no one need ever expect from them either intensity in labour or efficiency in execution.

If the good missionary had been alive two or three years ago and had watched for a half-hour the intense work and efficient methods by which the modern skyscrapers of Shanghai were being erected, he would have had good reason to revise his opinions, for changed conditions have developed a different tempo of accomplishment. The buildings with which he and other foreigners living in the interior were concerned were rather modest structures, residences, mission buildings or offices and there really was no reason why a delay of a day or two or of several weeks or months should cause any loss except to the temper of the foreigner who was paying for them. It did not affect the profits of the contractor, for supplies were bought and labour employed locally so that he never had much of a capital investment to protect and would get ahead with the job at the pace which best suited his con-

venience. His only spur to activity was the impatient ire of the foreigner.

With the construction of modern office buildings in which the investment runs into hundreds of thousands of dollars, the completion of a building on schedule is no longer a matter of satisfying an impatient missionary, but one of dollars and cents – which the Chinese contractor can understand. He may stand to lose a great deal of money if the work is not carefully planned and carried out. He must place contracts and orders for many thousands of dollars' worth of material to be delivered on a certain date, and in order to make money on his contract the completion of different parts of the building must be co-ordinated with the precision of a time-table. If the workmen are late in driving the piles the contractors will have to pay interest on money invested in steel and concrete and a multitude of other supplies. The same is true of every stage of the building operations and the result is that there are no delays except those unavoidable ones which add unhappy chapters to the lives of building contractors the world over.

Some of the most modern buildings in the world have been erected in the last few years in Shanghai which boasts a collection of skyscrapers no cities outside America can excel. All were put up by Chinese contractors and Chinese labour, utilising a minimum of technical assistance by foreign experts. The time required to complete these buildings would compare

very favourably with the time required for the completion of similar structures in other parts of the world. In fact Chinese contractors and workmen might possibly excel many other nationals in a competition of this sort because, outside of America, they have had more experience than any others in skyscraper construction.

This indifference regarding time is often duplicated by a similar indifference as to accuracy in measurements, precision or perfection in any form of workmanship. Foreigners find to their great exasperation, that a foot, a pint or a pound is *about* a foot, *about* a pint or *about* a pound. It may be a little more or a little less and doesn't matter anyway unless a purchase is involved and some cash to be paid over. Even here the Chinese are not such sharp bargainers as they are generally supposed to be and the Chinese gentleman will accept a bag of rice which he knows to be under weight rather than lose his dignity and bicker about it.

The Chinese housewife does not place such a high value on her dignity. When she goes shopping she carries her scales with her for she trusts no man and least of all does she trust those to whom she must pay out money. The cook employed by a foreigner may also carry his own scales and use them to check the weights of the shopkeeper, but it would never occur to him to use them in the kitchen. If a recipe calls for a certain number of ounces of butter or lard or flour, he never bothers to weigh out the ingredients but spoons

them out with lordly disdain for exact proportions. Since he is not paying for them and generosity costs him nothing, he always puts in more than the recipe calls for. The results, while arrived at by unscientific means, are usually entirely satisfactory.

In a set of a dozen Chinese plates it is rarely possible to find two which are exactly the same shape and size. When stacked one on the other they do not present the orderly appearance of plates in a foreign shop but are usually decidedly wobbly. Yet each plate is in itself a perfectly good plate with which no fault can be found and the Chinese shopkeeper can see no reason why the foreign lady who bought the plates should be so fussy about the lack of uniformity.

If the four legs of a Chinese table sit evenly on the floor it may be accounted a fortunate accident rather than credited to the skill and care of the carpenter. So long as the top of the table presents a reasonably horizontal surface, there should be no cause for complaint. A jiggling table which would drive a Westerner frantic would be unnoticed by a Chinese. If it does bother one, it can be very easily remedied by putting a small object under one of the defective legs. If intended for use in a Chinese home the manufacture of tables with legs of uniform height would be in vain for the floors are uneven. An uneven and defective floor which is full of cracks and knot holes is just as useful as any other and Chinese see no need to bother about such trifles. A vase, a poem or a painting

must be as perfect as possible because they are works of art, but a table is a utility and so long as it serves the purpose for which it was designed, nothing more should be demanded of it. No one expects a water buffalo to be a peacock.

All Chinese are either farmers or descended from farmers who never dreamed that floors, except in palaces, were made of anything but dirt, so few of them are removed by more than a couple of generations from dirt floors. Foreigners with their apartment houses and unreasonable passion for floors which are level are changing all this and I suppose that after a few generations all the table legs of China will be accurate.

Over a period of about forty years I have been assured by a number of British and American tailors and one Spaniard that they have given me what appears to their expert though prejudiced eyes to be a 'perfect fit'. My old Chinese tailor, Lao Hai Shing, who has made more suits for me than all the rest of them put together, knows that in the combination of my form and the fallibility which must encompass the best of tailors, no such thing as perfection is possible and he neither attempts it nor claims it. When he says that a suit of clothing 'can pass' I know that he is bestowing a sartorial accolade, the highest praise his sincerity will allow him to bestow. And in China if anything 'can pass', nothing more need be asked of it.

While the Chinese workman does not, as a general

rule, deal in accurate measurements or produce works of precision, there are some notable exceptions, and it might be stated as a general rule that where accurate precision work is necessary it will be found, but never where it is not essential. There is no cult of neatness and precision for the sake of neatness and precision or for perfection where perfection is nothing more than a vainglory and a vanity. If it were essential to their usefulness that each of a set of plates be of exactly the same size and shape, they would undoubtedly have been made that way centuries ago, but the fact that the diameter of one plate is a fraction of an inch smaller than the diameter of its fellow does not in any way alter the beauty or utility of the individual plate or the taste of the food. It is only when the servants stack them up that any imperfections may be seen.

When we come to Mah Jongg tiles the case is quite different. It is essential that every visible aspect of the tiles be as identical as the backs of playing cards, and for the same reason. That is not easy, for the backs of the tiles are made of well-seasoned bamboo which may differ both in grain and colour. The face of the tile is made of Australian cow bone which must also be perfectly matched. After this difficult task of matching bamboo and bone is completed the workman accomplishes wonders with the most simple and primitive tools. Small blocks of bamboo are dovetailed on small blocks of bone with a nicety that a difference amounting to the thickness of a sheet of air mail paper

would make impossible. I have watched the Mah Jongg workmen for hours and marvelled at a skill which is as much beyond my comprehension as the operation of a slide rule or the theory of relativity. I have marvelled even more at the way these blocks of bone and bamboo have stood the stress of hardship. I have a set I have played with for more than ten years, which has suffered many things, including the horrors of an American steam-heated apartment, but not a single daintily dovetailed joint has ever come loose. There is no secret in this but that of superb workmanship.

Another very skilful worker is the mender of broken porcelain. During centuries when the nobles and aristocrats in other parts of the world were eating their food out of wooden bowls, Chinese of the poorest class were using porcelain. These porcelain bowls were frequently broken but the fact that the Chinese knew nothing of cement did not prevent their being mended. Holes so tiny as to be almost microscopic were drilled around the broken edges and pieces joined together with small brass or copper rivets. No lapidary could do a more skilful job.

I have a friend who found the skill of the porcelain repairer useful in a very unusual way. While on a holiday trip in Weihaiwei he was unfortunate enough to break his dental plate which contained a complete set of upper false teeth. As there was no dentist nearer than a two days' journey this was a rather serious

matter and he was planning to abandon his holiday and live on soup while on a trip to the dentist.

The always resourceful Chinese houseboy suggested that 'porcelain fix-man maybe can fix'. As the broken plate was in its existing condition a perfectly worthless piece of junk, and no amount of tampering could make it any more useless and my friend was hungry, he decided to take a chance. The 'fix-man' was called in, drilled the plate, carefully hammered in the tiny rivets, and by dinner-time my friend was able to sit down and do justice to a good steak. He looked on this as a repair job of the most temporary nature but found it so satisfactory that he wore the plate for years. If the breaking of dental plates were frequent in America a porcelain 'fix-man' might build up a good business repairing them. It would certainly be cheaper to pay a few coppers to have the dental plate riveted than to send it to a dentist to be remade.

China developed her industries to a very high state before the machine age made precision necessary and they were later than other people in coming in contact with this necessity. Add to this the fact that Chinese labour has been and is so cheap that no one thought it worth while to train it, and you have two reasons for Chinese inefficiency and careless workmanship.

While the wages paid to Chinese labourers are low, Chinese efficiency as measured by production is also low. According to a Chinese authority a Chinese coal miner is only one-fourth as efficient as the British

coal miner and one-twentieth as efficient as the American. This efficiency scale as measured by the production of coal is not entirely accurate, for physical conditions in the mines as well as the employment of machinery are factors of probably greater importance than the skill and strength of the workman. The very low wages paid the coal miners in China make it profitable to work thin seams which in other countries would be abandoned. A better comparison is to be found in the cotton industry. According to the same Chinese authority a Chinese owned mill in Shanghai with 10,000 spindles will require from 550 to 600 operatives, while a Japanese mill of the same size and equipment requires only 350. In the weaving mills Chinese average two looms to the operator, Japanese mills five and a half.

But methods of employment in mines, mills and all other industrial establishments in China would account for a great deal of inefficiency. In most cases labour is secured through a contractor. Under this system there is no selection. The contractor is paid a lump sum to cover the wages of 1,000 workmen and naturally he pays them as little as possible.

With labour so cheap it hardly seems worth while to attempt any increased efficiency. The general rule in China, whether the operation be large or small, is that if you want things speeded up you should hire more workers. That system always succeeds and so creates a vicious circle. Because wages are low no one

strives for efficiency and because efficiency is low the wage scale remains low. This circle will probably be broken by China's more intimate contact with the Western world. In the meantime it explains a great many Chinese characteristics.

An American visitor to China commented on the fact that he could shock rice (or it may have been wheat) five times as fast as the Chinese farmer, thus adding another contribution to the mass of evidence that the Chinese are not efficient. His statement was undoubtedly true. But he overlooked the importance of the fact that in his speedy work he would undoubtedly shatter a great deal of the grain which would be irrevocably lost. To the Chinese farmer speed in shocking the grain on his tiny farm is of small importance, as it will usually, in any event, be completed before supper-time. But it is of supreme importance that none of the precious grains be lost. If one wishes to understand China he should always bear in mind the preponderant value of materials of all kinds over labour of all kinds.

IX

THE REWARD OF LABOUR

FIGURES pertaining to wages paid in China always require a great deal of explaining, for no matter how accurate they may be as to dollars and cents, they usually present a very misleading picture to those who live in countries with different standards of values. This is especially true when the figures are read by Americans who are accustomed to receiving high wages and to paying high prices for what they believe to be necessities.

For example, when I tell my friends that I paid my old house coolie the equivalent of $7 per month out of which he was, in theory at least, required to feed

and clothe himself and provide for his old age, a great many of them look at me as if I were a heartless beast who would probably have been a slave-owner had I lived in earlier times. Fortunately for me the coolie never thought so. He had a remarkably good job, starting in with a good wage when he joined me and in the twelve years he worked for me he had two increases in pay, finally bringing him up to the level of $7 per month. This is so much more than other coolies got that he was something of an aristocrat around Connaught Road and was envied by all his friends in the neighbourhood. He worked fairly long hours, for he was up at five o'clock and was always busy until nine and sometimes until later.

This coolie was not a poor man and did not look on himself as being either down-trodden, over-worked or poverty-stricken. He had all he wanted to eat, was – according to his standards – well clothed and in his way was quite a financier for he loaned small sums of money at usurious rates of interest to other servants. I have no doubt but that if I had at any time been in urgent need of a hundred Chinese dollars, he could have dug it up for me and would probably have loaned it to me at what would have been, for him, very low rates of interest, that is, not more than two or three per cent a month.

Every year he took a two-week vacation to visit his ancestral home near Ningpo, gossip with his relatives and contemplate with satisfaction the tomb which he

was building for himself. On these occasions I sent him to the boat in my car so that his arrival might excite the envy of the other passengers, give him a high standing among them and make his trip a kind of triumphal journey. My wife, more soft-hearted than I am about such things, usually gave him a couple of Chinese dollars. Aside from these two small contributions he paid his own expenses and also paid the wages of the substitute who did his work for him while he was away. He never returned without bringing us a present of some sort, usually a pair of chickens, but occasionally a pair of perfectly hideous ornaments which struck his fancy. In years when his neighbourhood enjoyed a period of prosperity, these gifts were augmented by similar gifts from his relatives who in this way manifested their gratitude to the liberal master who paid their relative the magnificent wage he received.

Now how, you will ask, can a man earning $7 per month and feeding, clothing and otherwise providing for himself, accumulate a surplus and become a small capitalist? The answer is not so difficult as one might think. In the first place, the $7 was not the absolute limit of his income. Waste paper, empty bottles and other odds and ends of stuff that would go into the garbage heap in America were salvaged by him and probably added another dollar to his income. There may have been a slight discrepancy between the amount of brass, silver and shoe polish bought and

the amount actually used, but if there was ever any profitable pilfering along that line, it was so adroitly carried out that we had no specific reason for suspecting it. Finally there were occasional tips bestowed by our guests and the annual bonus at China New Years consisting of an extra month's salary. All in all, his actual earnings were probably little less than $10. His earnings as a money-lender were quite a different matter for he had no need to dip into them for current expenses.

In order to get his economic position perfectly clear, it should be explained that he was at no expense for rent because he lived in a small servants' house on the premises. Nor did he have any incidental expenses for light, heat or water. The very limited use he had for light was adequately supplied by the one small electric bulb in his quarters. As he did not read, a couple of healthy glow-worms would really have satisfied all his practical needs. He was only in his room when asleep; during his waking hours, which coincided with his working hours, he was busy around the house, which was comfortable without heat. Except in the coldest weather he took a daily bath in the courtyard in the kitchen garden where, under cover of darkness, he stripped, scrubbed with laundry soap and poured buckets of water over himself.

His expense for clothing was somewhat lessened by the fact that we provided him with the aprons and other outward gear appropriate to his craft. He

had only to provide himself with underclothing and what might be called his ceremonial clothing, that is the suit worn on his monthly visit to the bath house to get a haircut, a good soaking in the hot bath, and enough gossip to keep his tongue wagging until time for the next visit. Nor did he have any expense for doctors or medicines for my wife treated him for minor ailments and we sent him to the hospital for important ones.

So, all in all, the coolie was rather well provided for, as his living expenses were confined to food, a minimum of clothing and luxuries which included his annual vacation trip and the care of the precious tomb in which he will finally be buried. But still he had to do all this on what is admittedly a very small monthly income. 'How can he do it?' asked my shocked American friends. It is always difficult to remember that money is only a medium of exchange.

The coolie's hard-earned dollars were worth to him as much as they would buy, and in China they would buy a great deal. Take first the matter of clothing. Except for some silk garments which he had worn for ten years and will probably serve their purpose until he dies, he was clothed entirely in cotton. A complete outfit consists of shirt, trousers, socks, shoes, which are also of cotton, and jacket or coat. A hat or cap is more or less optional with a Chinese. With him it was in the same category as the silk gown, as he wore his one hat only on the monthly trip to the barber's shop

and on his annual vacation. In any event the whole outfit, including the hat, could be bought for $4. He was never ragged and it may have been necessary for him to replace his wardrobe piecemeal once every year so that his annual expense for clothing would amount to about $5, or much less than one month's income.

This left him the major problem of food. Of course the staple food in this part of China is rice. This is augmented by greens of various sorts, especially spinach which is produced in China in infinite variety. Salted or pickled vegetables such as pickled celery add seasoning to these rather monotonous dishes and there is always a bottle of *soya*, the sauce which was the great-grandfather of Worcestershire. Occasionally the meal was augmented by fish of the cheaper variety because it is full of bones, as are many of the most delicious fish. He may once in a while have eaten some of the food from our table which he was told to throw away. All in all, his food bill did not amount to more than $3 a month, so that after he had taken care of the necessities of food and clothing and the luxuries of his monthly visit to the barber's shop and the annual vacation, his expenses still fell within, let us say, two-thirds of his income. Surely no one could ask for more than that.

In this attempt to demonstrate that a Chinese can live in health and comfort on a very small wage, I have, I must admit, sketched a picture which does not apply to a very large proportion of the men of his race.

As he was unmarried, his expenses were low, though he did support his old mother. Also he was rather miserly in his habits and certainly did not indulge in any riotous living such as the purchase of a few ounces of pork several times a month. However, the figures given as to the cost of his necessities in the way of food and clothing provide a fairly accurate yardstick with which to measure the needs of others.

But so far as perquisites are concerned – that is shelter, heat, etc., most of the workers of China live under about the same conditions and many of them under better. The vast majority of the employees of China are in much the same category as my coolie. They are either employees of shops or small factories or household servants. In each case they receive, in a way, more liberal treatment than the coolie. The wages they are paid may not be so large but in all shops, all Chinese households, and in a large number of small factories, they are provided with shelter, food and an annual gift of clothing.

Among the millions of wage-earners in China the fewest in number are the factory workers, that is, those who receive a fixed monthly wage from which they must pay their expenses. But all receive perquisites of some sort or other. There is not a factory in Shanghai, so far as I have been able to learn, in which the workers do not receive allowances which supplement their wages. These take many forms but I think one of the most interesting is the weekly allowance of a carton of

200 cigarettes which is made by a British tobacco company to each of its employees. An American belting company makes it a practice to give the employees leather for the making of their own shoes. This carries the employee back to the old agricultural traditions of employment where every employee was a farm hand and as such shared in the prosperity of the farm.

Of recent years attempts have been made by Communist agents to organise the workmen of China, but with scant success. The Chinese workman is still influenced by the clan system to such an extent that he has not become class conscious and still thinks of himself as an integral part of a great family system. Until that conception of mutual responsibilities is broken down, which will not be in the near future, there will be slight opportunity for any such revolutionary ideas as Communism to gain a foothold in China.

What I have written is not a defence of low wages but an attempt to explain what a low wage means in terms of subsistence. Chinese employees are not, as a rule, conscious of wages in the sense that we understand it. Peace, comfort and security of employment mean much more to them than the actual wage they are paid. It is rare for a Chinese employee to resign because he has been offered a higher wage elsewhere, but not at all unusual for him to quit when he has no immediate prospect of other employment, merely

because of some fancied slight or grievance. Among the mills of Shanghai there are many rather clumsily organised labour unions and during the past decade there have been a large number of strikes. But a surprisingly large proportion of these strikes have had nothing whatever to do with the matter of wages. Many of them have been called for what would appear to be the most inconsequential of reasons – such as the dismissal of a popular foreman or the refusal to allow smoking during working hours.

Chinese wage-earners have not learned to place a value on their own service. They still think of employment as something which will provide subsistence, that being their most pressing problem. Nor have they advanced far enough in the modern concept of social relationships to forget their old clan system in which sons work for the father and the father supports the sons. The result is that when a Chinese is asked what wages he wants, he is always disconcerted and instead of thinking about his own earning power, he thinks about the wage-paying ability of his prospective employer.

Thousands of farm women flock to Shanghai in search of employment during the winter months. In most cases the employment is temporary, for the women return to their more important work on the farms as soon as they are needed there. With men and women alike the desire to remain at home is so compelling that few ever leave home merely because

they can make more money elsewhere and they remain permanently in Shanghai only because of necessity. The great over-population of the country is well illustrated by the number of employment agencies, which are crowded by blue-gowned women who wait patiently for employment day after day and week after week.

These countrywomen all dress and look alike and presumably all have about the same training and capability, but there are four well marked divisions in the scale of wages which are not determined by the abilities of the servants but by the nationality of the employer. Those who pay the lowest wages are known as the native Chinese, that is those who were either born in Shanghai or in the immediate neighbourhood. A little higher wage must be paid by the Cantonese, for although they are of pure Chinese blood, they are looked on as semi-foreign by the Chinese from other parts of the country, just as a Connecticut Yankee is, in the deep South, looked on as a strange and alien creature. Next in the rising strata of wages come the Japanese, whose ways are strange to the Chinese but comparatively easy to satisfy because they are not so exacting as foreigners in the matter of cleanliness. At the top of the salary strata come the foreigners, especially the British and Americans, who outnumber all other nationalities combined. In each of these main divisions there are a number of subdivisions. For example a cook employed by a British police

sergeant would not think of asking the wages he would expect from the manager of a bank. In all cases the wage demanded and expected is determined by the paying ability of the employer rather than the earning capacity of the employee.

These gradations in wages have been fixed by old custom and nothing will change them. The fact that a maid employed for a foreigner has had no experience or training and is entirely unfitted for her work is never considered by her or by other Chinese as any reason why she should not receive the full wage which well-trained maids earn in foreign households.

X

THE LONG WAY ROUND

A GROUP of disciples of Confucius were sitting in a courtyard listening to the sage playing the lute in an inner room when they were startled by a harsh discord and they rushed into the house to see what was the matter. By the time they reached him they found the Master playing with his usual perfect technique. When they asked about the strange discord he explained that while he was playing he saw

a cat about to pounce on a rat and in order to save the life of the rat he had frightened it away by running his fingers violently over all the strings of the lute.

On another occasion a man whom he disliked called on Confucius and the sage sent word that he was too ill to see visitors. Then, before the caller was out of earshot, he picked up his lute and played and sang lustily to show that he was in the best of health. He wanted to indicate his thorough disapproval to his visitor and he did it in this way more effectively than would have been possible by any rude verbal message.

On an even more famous occasion the sage was compelled by the rules of courtesy to call on an official he was trying to avoid and was careful to time his call so that the host would not be at home. The official must have anticipated something of this sort, for he returned home unexpectedly and the sage was compelled to submit to the interview.

Chinese history is full of incidents like these and they are common in everyday life. Chinese have a genius for accomplishing their purposes by indirect methods or by the use of conventions which are perfectly understood by themselves but puzzling to the foreigner. When Confucius sent word that he was ill and then played and sang, he was simply observing one of the useful social conventions of the period, which deceived no one. Foreigners with fussy ideas about literal truth are often ignorant of the Chinese conventions

and charge the people with insincerity, deception and sly trickery.

Long before the younger nations were faced by similar problems the Chinese were, by the severity of their struggle for existence, forced to sharpen their wits. It was no longer possible, as in purely agricultural and pastoral communities, to live by the simple process of tilling the soil and harvesting the crops. Clever merchants and powerful officials began to play their parts in the affairs of the country and the simple country yokel ceased to exist, for he either starved or learned new tricks. If Chinese are the smartest traders in the world, as some believe them to be, there is good reason for it, for they have had a longer experience than any other people and under the most difficult competitive conditions.

That most of their famous stories of sly stratagems have had to do with military and political affairs is due to the fact that it was only with these events that the Chinese historians concerned themselves. There can be no doubt that the farmer, artisan and merchant were, in their own fields, equally clever at smart tricks which brought profit to themselves. We get a hint of this in one of the first regulations which Confucius put into effect when he began his brief career as governor of a small town in the Duchy of Loo, now a part of the province of Shantung. The farmers were feeding their livestock salty food and then watering them while on their way to market so as to give them

a deceitful weight. The artisans were manufacturing antique curios for which there was even in that remote period a good sale among collectors. The merchants had false sets of weights and measures, one with which they made their purchases, and one used in computing sales. The regulations promulgated by Confucius threatened dire punishment to all who committed these offences and, according to ancient history, his regulations were strictly enforced and the trade of the town put on a high moral plane. This may have been true, but the reform was not a permanent one for all these and many other tricks are in common use to-day.

Incidents of deceitful but successful acts of military strategy fill the pages of Chinese history. A warrior of ancient times was besieging a city on the Yangtsze River and at a critical point ran out of ammunition, which consisted almost exclusively of arrows. The nearest source of supply, except that held by the enemy, was several hundred miles away, and it looked as if the siege would have to be abandoned but a resourceful captain solved the problem of replenishing the supply. He ordered the construction of a number of barges in the semblance of fighting boats but with the superstructure composed entirely of straw. Under cover of darkness and a heavy fog he sent these barges by the walls of the beleagured city and, to make the effect more realistic, had straw-filled images of soldiers mounted at strategic corners, while real soldiers, safely concealed below made loud and provocative noises with drums and

firecrackers and war cries. The defenders rushed to the city wall and poured volleys of arrows at the barge, where they lodged harmlessly in the straw. The wily captain filled the port side of his straw barges with arrows, then manœuvred them so as to bring the starboard side under enemy fire. As a result the attackers were able to replenish their supply of ammunition and sallied forth the next day to capture the city. The incident is celebrated in many popular Chinese plays.

Chinese fables are not numerous but most of those which exist extol the cleverness of the weak and defenceless who by means of their wits manage to get the best of stronger adversaries. There are several of these in which the tiger, held in the greatest terror by Chinese, is always outwitted.

A tiger, noticing that a cat was very prolific in devices for catching game, placed himself under her instruction. Weeks went by while the cat gave the tiger daily lessons, and finally, wishing to be relieved of her onerous duties, she reported that there was nothing more to be learned; she had taught the tiger all her tricks.

'If that is the case,' said the tiger, 'you are of no further use to me and I shall eat you.' The cat ran up the trunk of a tree and, safe in its branches, laughed at the tiger.

'Here is one trick,' she jeered 'that I didn't teach you!'

In another fable the tiger was the victim of a double

deception. He caught a small monkey and was about to eat him when the monkey pointed out that he was too small to provide more than a mouthful, and offered to guide the tiger to a satisfactory feast if the latter would spare his life. The tiger agreed and the monkey led him to a hillside where a donkey was browsing – an animal which the tiger had not previously seen. The donkey saw the tiger, gazed reproachfully at the monkey, and said:

'My little brother, you have always brought me two tigers for my supper. Why do you bring me only one to-day?' Then he let out his loudest bray and the tiger fled for his life.

There are no fences in China and the Chinese farmer centuries ago evolved a system of protecting his growing crops without the expense of fences which would not only cost money to build but would cut off something from the productive area of the tiny fields. The same stratagem is still in use all over the country. The farmer merely sprinkles the plants with chicken feathers and the crops are as safe as they would be with a hog-tight woven wire fence, for the foraging animal has a nauseating aversion to feathers.

This long and constant struggle for existence appears to have sharpened the wits of animals as well as of men in China. Every fisherman who has had any experience will testify that no fish are quite so wary as those found in Chinese waters where every fish-catching device the mind of man can conceive has been in use

for centuries. The strings of fish displayed by the passing Chinese fishermen and the quantity of fish on sale in the markets show that the streams are well stocked but the amateur fisherman rarely makes a catch he is willing to discuss with his friends. The professional Chinese fishermen are successful only because they use traps and nets the disciple of Isaak Walton would scorn.

It appears that Chinese fish are not alone in their ability to fend for themselves against odds, for Chinese insects are equally resourceful. In a recent article on bee-keeping in Fukien province, a writer in the scientific *China Journal* says the greatest menace the domestic bees have to face comes from giant wasps which loiter around the hives and kill and rob the unwary field workers when they return laden with honey. The Chinese bees which have faced this menace for hundreds of generations are very clever in dodging these murderous robbers and in organising mass attacks against them. In this way they have managed to survive, but other bees are not so fortunate. Chinese bee-keepers in their attempts to improve the quality and quantity of the honey imported Italian bees, but the experiment was not successful. Colonies of the imported bees whose ancestors were unused to the merciless warfare are unable to defend themselves against the marauding wasps and fall an easy prey.

Kidnapping is a well-organised business in China and it is carried out with such a large degree of success

that Chinese live in mortal terror of that brand of criminals. A few years ago a very daring pair of kidnappers intimidated a pawnbroker near his shop and started to escort him to their lair through a rather busy street, warning him that if he tried to escape or raised an alarm they would kill him. The terrified captive was afraid to say a word. The trio, consisting of the pawnbroker and his two captors, were finally held up by a traffic light and stood for some moments on a street corner in full view of a traffic policeman. The pawnbroker did not speak but he slipped the bow knot in the string which served him as a belt and his trousers fell to the ground. The horrified policeman ran over to put him under arrest and the kidnappers fled. The story came out when the pawnbroker was hauled into court on a charge of 'indecent exposure'.

One of my fellow-Americans made frequent business trips into the interior provinces where he lived for several weeks at a time in the sketchy and uncomfortable accommodations afforded by Chinese inns. Like most other foreigners who are veteran travellers in the hinterlands of China, he had developed a certain method of procedure in order to smooth out the rough places and make life as comfortable as possible. Chinese inns are notoriously infested with bedbugs but my friend had a system which quarantined them and enabled him to spend a night in the worst inn with considerable comfort. He carried with him one of the light folding cots with which every traveller in China is

equipped. After supper his servant would set up the cot in the middle of the room with each leg immersed in a shallow tin of kerosene, thereby effectively insulating it against the encroachments of bedbugs, centipedes and other vermin. With a candle at the head of his cot, my friend would read until he fell asleep, thus achieving a degree of comfort and entertainment which left little to be desired.

One night, during the early stages of one of his long journeys, his pleasant evening was disturbed by an impudent rat which scampered around the floor and sniffed at the kerosene in the insulation tins. He stood this for a half-hour and then in a fit of Nordic anger threw the book at the rat and, there being nothing else to do, blew out the candle and listened to the rat until he went to sleep. When daylight came he found the rat was gone and so was the book, except for those indigestible portions which it had not eaten. This was the last book he had with him and until he got back to Shanghai two weeks later he had nothing to read.

A Chinese employee of mine was making a trip through the beautiful Yellow Mountain and one night in a Chinese inn he found not one rat but a half-dozen, scampering about his room. But he didn't throw his book at the pests. Instead he paid one of the inn servants a few coppers for the loan of a cat for the night, shut the cat up in the room with himself and the rats and so read and slept in peace and carried his book away with him.

XI

GETTING ON WITH NEIGHBOURS

REALISING the impossibility of attaining perfection the Chinese have spent little time in striving for it and have cultivated a talent for tolerance towards the physical conditions of life and the mental and moral limitations of others, as well as themselves. This is true of small things as well as large. The people of China tolerate injustice, discomfort, hunger, misfortune, dirt, but most of all they tolerate each other. They have developed what Mr. James Harvey Robinson refers to as 'a sort of enforced brotherhood of un-

avoidable competition and interlocking misfortunes'. They may not believe, with Napoleon, that 'the desire for perfection is the greatest weakness of the human spirit', but they do not expect perfection in anything and are cheerfully willing to make the best of things in an admittedly imperfect world.

While the intense struggle for existence has made the Chinese selfish and individualistic, the same conditions have built up a code of conduct towards each other which enables them to do their work with the minimum of friction. They are, of necessity, constantly bumping into each other but bumps are tolerated as one of the unavoidable inconveniences of life. The rights of the other fellow are respected to a degree that often strikes the foreigner as absurd. A motor-bus may be crowded to capacity, but a few more passengers pile in, adding greatly to the discomfort of those who are already occupying all the seats. The conductor, or some of the passengers, might well call the attention of the new-comers to the fact that the bus is already full to capacity, but no one does. Everyone assumes that the late-comer has just as much right to a seat as anyone else.

A countryman in need of a little extra money chops up some firewood and brings it to town for sale. He divides his load into two equal portions and carries them suspended at the two ends of a bamboo pole where they sway from side to side. In streets not more than six feet wide this load of firewood presents a lot of

traffic problems, especially as the porter carries it at a swift jog-trot – the ostentatious speed at which all burdens must be carried through the streets of Chinese cities.

In spite of all that he can do, he makes an intolerable nuisance of himself. 'Look out! I'll bump you!' he shouts. And 'Make way!' at every step. People on the street obligingly crowd as close to the wall as possible

or step into one of the small open shops. Some are invariably bumped and some may have their clothing torn, but no one pays any attention. Huge baskets of eggs are carried in the same way and there are seldom any breakages. Everyone respects the right of the porter to carry the eggs through the streets and makes way for him.

There does not appear to be any rule of the road in the rural districts of China, for people turn to the right or the left as may suit their convenience. But actually there is one very sensible rule and the only one that is needed in a district where all traffic is pedestrian. The rule is that right of way shall be given to the burden bearer or to the one whose travel is the most difficult. This rule applied to mandarins themselves and even when on official journeys they forgot their dignity and stepped out of the footpath to make way for the coolie carrying a load on his shoulders.

In the narrow waterways boatmen begin shouting to each other when they are still many yards distant, giving full details about the weight and the nature of the cargo they are carrying. There may be, and most probably are, frequent deceptions, but the object of this mutual exchange of information is to determine which boat has the right of way. The rule of the creeks and canals is that the boat which is the lighter and more easily managed must make way for the heavier one, even though that procedure may slow up the progress of a whole fleet of small craft. Thus the

heavy, slow-going barge which is loaded to the gunwales with building stones takes precedence over all the others, much to the amusement of the foreigner who adds another item to his collection of the topsy-turvy ways in which things are done in this strange country.

Boat jams on these crowded waterways are of common occurence and frequently all traffic is brought to a standstill for hours. To the casual foreign observer the tangle looks hopeless. It appears that nothing short of the complete destruction of one or two of the boats will ever straighten things out. Useful as such an official might be, there is no such thing as a water traffic policeman and the boatmen compose their own difficulties. Everyone shouts at the top of his voice and issues orders to which no one appears to pay the slightest attention. But by an arrangement which everyone seems to understand some of the boats pull out of the centre of the stream and halt there while other boats wriggle forward. Any one of the boats in the tangle could mess things up by moving out of turn, but they do not, every movement is properly regimented and soon the stream of traffic is again moving as before.

Although it may be disconcerting to our pride, the fact that Chinese assume all foreigners to be devoid of good manners and ignorant as to the ordinary niceties of etiquette is often of great convenience to us on occasions like this, for they have compassion on our ignorance and tolerate our rudeness. On many

occasions when I have been on a houseboat carrying no cargo at all and bound to no serious destination, thereby having no standing whatever in the brotherhood of boatmen, I have been given the right of way over cargo-boats of much superior standing. This was solely because of tolerance for the ignorance of the foreigner and for his well-known habit of losing his temper if he does not have his own way. Some foreigners assume this courtesy to be a tacit acknowledgment of their own superiority, thus giving the Chinese something else to laugh about.

Evidence of toleration is found everywhere and even in such a humble matter as that of household sanitation. There are many European and American housewives who strive for the ideal of a spotless house and there are many advertisers who buy space in the magazines to encourage that ideal, which they should know, better than all others, is an impossible one. With all their scrubbing and polishing the housewives never quite succeed, for there is always a bit of dust loitering in this corner or that, to say nothing of the millions of disease germs which a microscope would discover in the most spotless kitchen. Chinese housewives never attempt this impossible ideal. In every household, even the meanest and most obviously filthy, the battle against dirt actually goes on, but never with the idea that it can be vanquished completely. In this, as in other things, the Chinese reach a comfortable compromise and a house that is reasonably clean is deemed to have

met all the requirements anyone should demand. If dirt and rubbish are swept under the table, it is at least out of the way and will not be seen except by those who are impolitely curious.

The Confucian doctrine of 'The Golden Mean' is one which all Chinese follow. It may be said to be a doctrine of compromise. In any controversial issue neither side can be entirely right nor entirely wrong. The correct course to follow must be somewhere in between. Each side is always willing to admit this and that is the reason that so many bitter personal and political controversies are patched up. The uncompromising crusader gets nowhere in China, for everyone laughs at the stupidly conceited idea of the man who thinks that he and he alone can be right. I don't think the two-party political system as exemplified in America would ever work in China. A Chinese could not be either a good Democrat or a good Republican. He could never fit himself into the controversial picture of American life.

XII

THERE ARE NO SECRETS IN CHINA

Most Americans are but a few generations removed from a frontier ancestor who secured as big a piece of land as possible, built his home on it and lived contentedly miles away from his nearest neighbour. Whether it was a log cabin in the forest or a homestead on the plain, the residence was isolated and a self-contained unit. Isolation and privacy became a fetish and a fashion with them and is now a treasured tradition. A great uncle of mine, who was born in Ohio, migrated first to Missouri and then to East Texas as the two older states became more thickly settled. He lived in Texas contentedly for

several years until a man he didn't know acquired a farm and built a house three miles away, thus becoming his nearest neighbour. My ancient relative then sold his place and moved out to West Texas where for twenty years he had no neighbour within ten miles. When in a casual search of family history, I inquired into the reasons for his various moves, it developed that the compelling reason was that the various places had successively got 'too damned crowded'.

My great uncle's many descendants, direct and collateral, live now in flats and apartment-houses, but few of them have completely lost that desire for isolation and privacy which is shared by many other Americans. The apartment-house, in spite of its apparent popularity, has been accepted with reluctance as a necessary evil. I have often thought that the reason why dwellers in apartment-houses talk so much about the comforts and beauties of their flats is because they suffer from an inferiority complex. They are secretly ashamed of the fact that they are not living in the proud isolation of a house.

In their long recorded history, which covers a period of several thousand years, Chinese have never lived in isolated homesteads. Indigenous tribes were driven out and the vast territory which comprises China was settled by the people from the Yellow River, but there were few individual pioneers. The Chinese moved into barbarian territory en masse, as clans rather than as families. With the development

of the country there were many clearings in the forests in China but there was never a log cabin in the clearing. The pioneer would fell the trees and cultivate the soil but he built his house in the village, which might be several miles distant but was surrounded by the dwellings of other pioneer members of his own family and encompassed by a protective wall. Here more than two thousand years ago, they lived under physical conditions comparable with those of the American apartment-house, but the social surroundings were quite different. In China those who were thrown together to live in the crowded villages were relatives, all members of the same clan. If by some circumstance a stranger made his home in the village, his first and most important task was to gain acceptance by the clan. If he failed, he moved on, for there was no room for him.

This neighbourliness became a matter of course, something to be taken for granted. Chinese people got into the habit of living in crowds, learned how to adapt themselves to crowded conditions and to like them, as they still do. A Chinese who rents a house in a compound and finds that there are three or four other families living so close to him that they can overlook everything he does and overhear everything he says, finds nothing strange in the situation and makes no objection to it. An American of the same class under such circumstances would find this residence most undesirable, but the Chinese tenant considers it a cause

for congratulation. He has no fear of being lonely, for here are a lot of neighbours with whom he can at once make friends. While they may overhear and overlook him, he will find it equally interesting to pry into their affairs and he will always have someone to gossip with.

Americans gladly endure the inconvenience of suburban residence because of the quiet and privacy it affords them, but near big Chinese cities like Shanghai one often finds that anomaly, a tenement in the suburbs

where individuals are crowded together as closely as they would be in the heart of the city. Another anomaly, equally strange to a foreigner, is found in the expensive and very ornate Chinese private residences which are so frequently built as closely as possible to adjoining houses. No foreigner would build a residence for himself on a location surrounded by cheap shops, but Chinese not only find no objection to this but seem actually to prefer crowding to isolation. Among the wealthy of Shanghai there was a peace-time vogue for small country villas with large gardens, but the

wealthy owners never lived in these places and only paid them occasional week-end visits.

In a sheltered corner near the house I formerly occupied in Shanghai, a fortune-teller and professional letter-writer had set himself up in business some years before I moved in. He paid no rent or taxes but his occupancy appeared to be as secure as mine. We were quite good friends and he found me a rather profitable neighbour, for frequently our guests had their fortunes told and paid him in silver coins instead of the coppers he received from his regular customers. In all other countries where I have had an opportunity to investigate the industry, the professional fortune-teller is equipped with a booth as secret as a confessional where the decrees of the fates may be revealed in a confidential manner. But there was nothing secret about the equipment of my neighbour, nor is there in that of any other fortune-teller in China. He sits at the edge of the pavement at a little portable table and here the expectant mother learns whether it is going to be a boy or a girl, while the worried shopkeeper is advised as to what business conditions he may expect. The whole neighbourhood also learns, for as soon as a client appears everyone who can do so crowds in to listen. In a few minutes they all know just as much as the client knows.

His other profession, that of public letter-writer, should according to Western standards be even more secret than that of fortune-telling, for the public letter-

writer deals with facts of life too intimate to be confided to the most discreet of private secretaries. To him come illiterate women who want letters written to their absent husbands, and when the husband replies, through another public letter-writer, she comes to him again to get the letter read. On each occasion everyone in the neighbourhood listens.

From the vast numbers of them which find their way into print, it is apparent that a very large number of people in China keep diaries. A more careful examination of these diaries will also lead to the conclusion that eventual publication was the real reason for writing them. I have read translations of a great many of these diaries and have yet to see one which could not be published without in any way embarrassing the writer. But perhaps that is true of all diaries.

Throughout their lives Chinese enjoy so little privacy that they do not know what the term means except in the material sense of physical isolation from others, but even this is a rare occurence. As a youth everything that he does is subject to deliberation by the family council and as he grows older he never escapes interference by members of his family, though the weight of their authority grows less. At the same time his authority grows over the younger generation and the number of relatives with whom he is thrown into daily contact never decreases.

It is almost literally true that the Chinese is born in a

crowd, lives in a crowd, and dies in a crowd. It is quite easy to imagine many who have never in their lives spent a whole day outside the company of relatives and friends. Except in the most unusual cases the Chinese is born into a large family and as he grows up he is thrown into intimate contact not only with his parents but also with brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and cousins, to say nothing of possible grandparents and innumerable others removed by the second degree. Until his dying day he never knows what it is to be away from the prying and critical, or the friendly and understanding eyes of relatives, friends and neighbours.

Every action is as public as if performed on a stage to an audience which may applaud or condemn. Under these circumstances of life a Chinese becomes a theatrical person and puts the best face on everything he does. The elaborate ritual of ceremony and the symbolism which gives a meaning to the most simple actions provides rich ground for the display of histrionic talent and Chinese develop these to the utmost. Most Chinese officials now wear trousers, but in the old days when all wore ceremonial skirts, a mandarin could not sit down, stand up, or move about from one part of the room to another without a theatrical swish of skirts which any actress might envy. At feasts a Chinese gentleman will pour you a glass of wine or fish a titbit from the communal bowl, and always with a gesture.

They are never betrayed into the gaucheries which

make life miserable for the timid, for though almost every conceivable human characteristic is to be found in individual Chinese, it would be extremely difficult to find one who was diffident or shy. All have the self-assurance and aplomb of the child who was brought up in stage surroundings. When I was a youngster in school we were taught a rhyme which ran :

'You'd scarce expect one of my age
To speak in public on the stage.'

A verse like this would be out of place in China where the family of every child provides a stage which the child soon learns to use. A Chinese will burst into speech at the slightest provocation and seems to need no special training. He may appear shy when talking to you alone, but there is nothing a Chinese enjoys more than an opportunity to carry on a conversation with a crowd of four or five. In the way that he secures and then holds the attention of the group, he shows a technique that in other countries would be considered professional.

When a Chinese travels he is much like an American in the eagerness with which he makes friends of chance acquaintances. It is possible to imagine a couple of Englishmen travelling in a railway carriage for hours without ever speaking a word to each other. It is impossible to imagine a couple of Chinese travelling together for a few minutes before each knows all about the other's family history and they are soon chatting

away with the garrulous intimacy of old friends. The ease with which the American becomes chummy with chance acquaintances makes him an easy victim of confidence games and it is not surprising that this should also be true of Chinese.

Chinese of all ages scribble their names in public places. Many of them do a great deal more than scribble for they give their names a degree of conspicuousness that could only be achieved by means of long and laborious preparation, involving the carrying over long distances of paint pots, brushes and ladders. The walls of every pagoda in China are covered with names. In and near the coast ports only American sailors surpass the Chinese in defacing the walls of buildings.

Even the ownership of a garden in China does not necessarily ensure privacy to the proprietor, nor does he appear either to expect or desire it. Almost every privately owned garden in China is public to the extent that anyone who wants to visit it is welcome. The residence of the owner may be reserved for his own personal use but that is not the invariable rule. Visitors frequently wander through the reception-hall and are barred only from the bedrooms and kitchen. On two occasions I have occupied residences with rather large gardens and in each case I found it necessary to employ a watchman whose sole duty was to keep visitors out. When they saw the flowering shrubs in bloom in the spring, they took it for granted

that they were welcome to come in and view them at close range. I am sure that I gained a very bad reputation with my Chinese neighbours, who felt that I was adopting a dog-in-the-manger attitude by refusing to allow them to wander over my lawn and look at my flower-beds, and I have always had a sort of guilty feeling that they were right.

XIII

THE WICKEDNESS OF THE HEATHEN

For several reasons it was inevitable that of the many books written about the life, customs and character of the Chinese, the vast majority should have been written by missionaries. Foreigners who live in China are divided into four general classes: (1) business men, (2) consular officials, (3) missionaries, and (4) employees in one of the services of the Chinese government. Business men as a rule

have neither the leisure nor the desire to write. The consular or diplomatic official is for obvious reasons rarely allowed to write anything while on active service. Employees of the government must also maintain an enforced silence. On the other hand, the missionary is a free agent and he has better opportunities than either the business man or the official to study the people. He always learns the language as a part of his evangelistic equipment and usually lives in close contact with Chinese, often in isolated mission stations where there are few if any other foreigners. The missionary has every encouragement to write, for with any talent at all he can make writing an invaluable aid in his work, especially in keeping up interest in foreign missions. It was towards the promotion of this interest that most of the books by missionaries were written, and the few which were not written with that purpose in view consciously or unconsciously presented missionary propaganda. Since the missionary came to China to convert the Chinese to Christianity he often painted a picture of a nation steeped in idolatry, superstition and sin, which loomed large in the evangelistic eye.

It is impossible to conceive of their doing anything else for missionaries are propagandists in the best sense of the word. Their careers are based on the premise that the Chinese are sinful and idolatrous and should be converted to the Christian faith. Having come to China to conquer sin, they have a keen and

wary eye upon their ancient enemy. Anyone who looks for sin in any part of the world will have no difficulty about finding it, and the search for evidence of sin has never been prosecuted in any country with more perseverence and skill than by the missionaries whose work has brought them to China where sin is not only prevalent but exists unconcealed in many a picturesque guise. It is only of recent years that some missionaries have come to take a more tolerant and sympathetic view of the Chinese people.

The Catholic missionaries being the first to come to China were the first to record exaggerated stories about the inherent sinfulness of the Chinese race, all being based on the premise, which appeared perfectly sound in their eyes, that any nation which was of heathen origin and declined to accept Christianity when offered it was *ipso facto* a nation of sin. For many decades the 'Annals of the Propagation of the Faith', a record of French missionary activity in China, abounded in stories of the undoubted devotion, self-sacrifice and martyrdom of the missionaries and of the almost unbelievable wickedness of the Chinese, the two being set forth in striking contrast. There can be no doubt about the sincerity of these pious missionaries, nor can there be any doubt about the fact that many of the stories they recorded were perversions of the truth. The explanation of this apparent anomaly is doubtless to be found in the fact that these early French missionaries, who often faced death, lived under a nervous

strain and a religious enthusiasm which made it impossible for them to see things in the right perspective and filled their minds with visions as false as they themselves were sincere.

Père Abbé Huc was one of the most famous of these missionary authors. He went to China in 1838 as a member of the Lazarist congregation and remained there for fourteen years, during which time he travelled extensively, visited Mongolia and Thibet and learned to speak the languages of those two countries as well as a number of the dialects of China. In fact his genius for languages and his histrionic abilities were so great that he had no difficulty about impersonating either a Thibetan priest or a Chinese scholar. On his return to France he wrote several books about China which attracted so much attention that they were translated into English and published in London. His *The Chinese Empire* is still looked on by many as an authoritative work, though not by anyone who knows anything about the country. I have recently read for the second time the two volumes of this work and find it difficult to believe that anyone could, at any time, have accepted this book as a true account of the characteristics of any people on earth. I might write many pages quoting in detail the many absurd stories with which the book abounds, but I will recount only a few of them.

The first two have to do with the Chinese love of gambling. In order to illustrate the depths to which

this vice would lead them Père Huc told of witnessing, with his own eyes, gambling parties in Peking where some poor unfortunate would lose all his money, then all his clothes, and finally without a stitch of clothing on him, would be cast out into the bitter weather to die. According to the pious chronicler, the wicked successful gamblers would then watch the unfortunate freeze to death before returning to their game.

As one who has figuratively lost his shirt in many a poker game, this strikes me as being rather harsh and unreasonable conduct, but it is not one-half so bad as the second anecdote the good *padre* records to build up further evidence as to the sinfulness of gambling in general and of the special sinfulness of gambling in China in particular. He said that occasionally two Chinese, neither of whom had any money or other possessions, would meet and, having nothing else with which to gamble, would take chances on each other's fingers. The bets were made and the dice were thrown. When the result was known the loser accommodatingly stuck his finger under a wooden block and the winner of the game chopped it off with a cleaver. Père Huc said he had never actually seen this happen, but Arab traders who visited China in A.D. 900 had seen it and written about it, and although this was almost a thousand years later, he knew that this sinful habit of chopping off fingers continued to the present day. Many others who had seen it had told him about it.

Having in this way disposed of the sin of gambling, the good priest turned his attention to the matter of drunkenness. He started with the statement that Chinese are great drunkards, that drunkenness is one of the besetting sins of the country, and with gambling one of the principal reasons for the poverty of the people. He explained that while in South China the people drink a comparatively mild rice wine, this is not true in North China, where a strong brandy is consumed. This brandy, he says, is so strong, and is consumed by the inebriates in such large quantities that inflammable fumes from the liquor are exhaled from every pore of the body and sometimes the poor drunkard, in lighting his pipe, sets fire to himself and is consumed in a burst of flame. To those of us who have lived in China at least as long as Père Huc and have observed the liquor consumption of the Chinese with a more sophisticated and experienced eye than a pious missionary could be expected to possess, I would say that his appraisal of the drinking habits of the Chinese was entirely wrong. I have frequented the taverns and consorted with the tipplers of a dozen or more different countries and I know of no race and have heard of no race more temperate than the Chinese.

Père Huc next turns his attention to the family relations of the Chinese and states that Chinese marriages are almost invariably unhappy, and that Chinese husbands always beat their wives. This statement, to one who has lived in China, is almost as

surprising as those about drunkenness and the cruelty of gamblers. Whatever other faults the Chinese may have a resort to physical violence is the last of them. To give a wife an admonitory slap may be usual and in some cases a justifiable proceeding, but there is a great deal of difference between a slap and a beating. However, according to the *padre*, the habit or the custom that Chinese husbands have acquired of beating their wives was so common as to have become a cult and those who did not conform to it were held up to censure and ridicule.

To illustrate this he tells of an unhappy incident which had come to his personal attention. A Chinese couple were very happily married and the contentment of the husband became a joke in the neighbourhood. He finally sensed the fact that he was being laughed at because he did not, like other husbands, beat his wife. So in order to prove his manliness and his willingness to adhere to local custom he went home and beat his wife to death, and was very unhappy about it, for he still loved her.

These incidents of reckless gambling, spectacular drunkenness and the vain murder of an innocent wife would be enough to convince me of the complete wickedness of the Chinese if I thought there was one word of truth in them, which I do not.

Protestant missionaries who came to China later did not go to the lengths of Père Huc but many of them have quoted incidents from his book and all of them

have perhaps unconsciously and unavoidably painted a dark picture of Chinese life. In fact almost every book written about China by a missionary is full of scattered exclamation marks expressing the shocked astonishment of the writer at the moral lapse of some individual Chinese.

They were especially indignant at the attempts, often very successful, the Chinese made to get the best of them in every business deal – attempts for which I cannot blame the Chinese in the least. From their point of view the missionary must have seemed a very peculiar man, ready for fleecing by the first person who came along. He was not engaged in any gainful occupation but was supported from some mysterious source which no one understood. The missionary told them about the contributions of missionary societies at home, but the idea that anyone would give away good money for such a fanciful reason was too absurd for belief. They usually set the missionary down as being a rather clumsy liar who was trying for some reason to conceal his real reason for coming to China. It was much more reasonable to believe that he gained his obvious wealth by some magical means, such as turning stones into lumps of silver. The story that missionary doctors killed babies in order to make medicine out of their eyes was believed in many parts of the country for years.

Not only did the missionary earn nothing but he gave things away, small books on religious subjects,

which obviously cost a great deal of money to print. If he was a medical missionary, as a great many of them were, he not only treated sick people free of charge, but made no charge for the medicines. Generally the mental picture of the missionary in Chinese eyes was that of a man with a mysterious source of wealth and peculiar ideas of performing services and giving things away without expecting any compensation. He was, in other words, a plain sucker who invited everyone to take advantage of him and every Chinese who could do so took him for a ride.

It is an interesting and illuminating fact that while business men in China generally bear testimony to the honesty of the Chinese, missionaries are almost unanimous in denouncing them as thieves and rascals. It is obvious that the business man has not only had more opportunities for observation but by means of his experience is better qualified to form an opinion. It seems to boil down to this: the business man, by taking obvious precautions, finds dealings with Chinese to be eminently satisfactory and that the Chinese are, as a rule, honest. The missionary, ignorant of the ordinary technique of trading, falls into traps set by his own ignorance and inexperience, and blames the Chinese.

Except for the inexperienced who extend credit recklessly, losses from bad debts in China are remarkably low. A British company which, about the turn of the century, began to develop the cigarette business in China found it necessary to allow liberal

credit terms to induce dealers to stock the new product for which there was not as yet any steady or dependable demand. The company protected itself in every possible way by means of 'shop guarantees', that is the underwriting of obligations by one or more shops. But they did not know how this would work out and so the giving of credit in China was an experiment which might prove hazardous.

The directors in London set up a reserve for bad debts amounting to one per cent of the gross sales. As the years went by the bad debts were written off but the reserve accumulated to tremendous proportions and provided profits which had not been dreamed of. After a decade or more of operation the company found that their actual loss from bad debts did not amount to more than a tenth of one per cent on the total sales. Other companies which do business with Chinese dealers on a long-term credit basis have had similar experiences, always of course where they exercised good judgment and took the necessary precautions.

What has been said above in criticism of the missionaries refers particularly to their interpretation of Chinese life and character and to their actions in the past rather than the present. With closer contact with the Chinese has come a closer understanding and an appreciation of the fact that, in spite of their nonconformity to Christian beliefs, they possess many sound virtues and a code of ethics which has endured for a period long antedating the Christian era. With

each new generation of missionaries criticism of the Chinese has become more considerate; strange stories of moral turpitude less frequent. No one in recent years has gone to the length of Abbé Huc in recording highly improbable incidents, but he is occasionally still quoted as an authority – often by people who should know better. Unfortunately a great deal of harm has been done by missionary interpretations of the Chinese character. It will be generations before this false picture is entirely erased.

XIV

THE HOME OF THE FIRECRACKER

WHILE in a great many ways Chinese display a refinement and delicacy of taste equal or superior to that of many other people, this refinement cannot be said to extend to the matter of sound. They are in every way a noisy race and quiet in China is so rare and so hard to obtain that it is looked on as a luxury to be enjoyed only by the fortunate few. Although

music plays a very large part in the lives of Chinese, both songs and instrumental pieces appear to the Western ear to be not only discordant but unnecessarily loud and clamorous. In all popular Chinese musical performances, the production of a tremendous volume of sound appears to be the principal aim and function of the orchestra, each individual performer competing, fairly or unfairly, with all the others. Fifes, gongs, cymbals and drums play prominent parts and they are never muted. There is no place for a comparatively quiet instrument such as a 'cello. The shrill Chinese flute is most popular with amateur musicians.

Vocal pieces in the orthodox theatre are usually rendered in a high falsetto which to unsophisticated Western ears sounds more like a squeal than anything else. In fact to most foreigners the problematical charm of Chinese music is in direct proportion to its distance, and most of them keep as far away from it as possible. However, Chinese like it and as they are the only people to willingly listen to it, no one else should complain. I feel sure that one can get used to it. I know that after being a casual and involuntary listener to Chinese music for twenty-five years, it does not sound so awful as it did at first, and I have heard a few selections that I really liked.

So many faulty but highly interesting conclusions have been arrived at regarding the physical and mental characteristics of the Chinese that it is surprising no

one has suggested the theory that they are, as a race, hard of hearing. This could be supported by a mass of circumstantial and convincing evidence that could be gathered quite easily. Plenty of data could be found in any office.

Two clerks sitting at the same desk will discuss a routine matter of accounts in voices that can be heard all over the room – a clamour which is very disturbing to any foreigner who is in the neighbourhood but to which no one else appears to pay the slightest attention. If the clerks get really excited, as they frequently do, the rattle of their monosyllabic words sounds like machine gun fire with occasional bursts of shrapnel which mark the high spots in the argument. The effect is heightened by the fact that in some cases both of them talk at the same time, or give that impression by the frequency with which they interrupt each other. If one of them finds it necessary to consult another employee on the other side of the room, he does not leave his seat. Shouting is much easier than walking and takes less time. In no place in the world are microphones or office telephone systems less necessary than in China.

Children shout their lessons in school, and some foreign observers say that this not only permanently injures their vocal cords but establishes habits which follow them through life. This may be true, but there must be other reasons for the high-pitched voices of the Chinese, as a very small proportion of the present

adult generation ever saw the inside of a schoolroom. Illiterate coolie and renowned scholar alike, everyone has the vocal equipment of a public speaker and uses it on every occasion whether or not there is any necessity for it. An argument between two who are engaged in a trivial street quarrel is not carried on more than a few minutes before it becomes a community affair, for each addresses the bystanders and soon the whole neighbourhood knows all about the controversy and everyone takes part in it.

The full, resonant human voice which is fairly common in other countries is so rare in China that its sound is always surprising. Even when a voice is heard at such a distance that the words are indistinguishable, it is usually easy to tell whether the speaker is a Chinese or a foreigner just as it is usually easily possible to distinguish a Chinese laugh and a Chinese cough. Whether or not Chinese are able to whisper intelligibly to each other I do not know but I am sure that they seldom attempt it. If two of them have a confidence to impart to each other they travel to some distant and secluded spot or, with the right forefinger they indicate meaningful words on the open left palm. Among my Chinese neighbours were two brothers who lived in an adjoining house and who kept very late hours. It was not at all unusual to hear them at three o'clock in the morning carrying on an intimate conversation in voices which could be heard all over the block.

When at the telephone Chinese cannot forget that the man they are talking to may be several miles away and they raise their voices accordingly. If the telephone were not a stout piece of machinery every instrument in China would be wrecked in a month. As is true regarding all things in China there are always exceptions to the general rule and in the matter of sound this is found in the city of Soochow where the speech of the natives is soft and pleasing to the ear. But Soochow people who move to other parts of the country soon adopt their neighbours' noisy habits.

The idea that anyone should wish to dine in quiet is exceedingly strange to Chinese minds and one of the few places that is noisier than a Chinese theatre is a restaurant. Everyone, guests and servants alike, contributes to the din. The cook bangs pots and pans on the stove; the boys who set the table and serve the food rattle the chinaware and the cutlery and the guests shout at each other and roar with laughter. When the order for the meal is given it is relayed vocally from one servant to another and so finally reaches the cook two or more floors below. Since the numerous private dining-rooms are separated from each other by nothing more than very low and flimsy partitions, one can enjoy the din at all the other tables as well as his own. At least one radio will be going full blast, perhaps two or three, each being tuned in on different stations. If one is giving a really swanky party he will bring in sing-song girls who will sing

shrilly and strum their guitars. At least one table is sure to be playing the boisterous finger-counting game. A popular Chinese restaurant is one huge and noisy floor show with no cover charge.

The old-fashioned restaurant of foreign lands, with thick carpets, shaded lights and low spoken waiters would strike the unsophisticated Chinese as a particularly ghastly place in which to dine. The popping of champagne corks would not, for him, relieve the dead monotony of comparative silence. Even in Chinese private homes a dinner is a rather noisy affair. Meals are always served at round tables so that the conversation is not confined to those seated on the right or the left. Anyone can talk to anyone else at the table, and usually does. Servants add to the pleasant hubbub by shouting orders to each other. When they go to work in the houses of foreigners they are usually able to adapt themselves to the foreigners' peculiar ideas regarding quiet, but in the more boisterous atmosphere of a club bar-room they find this very difficult. Only by the most rigid discipline and careful training can a servant be taught to serve a drink or bring a packet of cigarettes without telling the whole club about it.

Chinese have no conception of the term 'quiet efficiency'. Indeed the two words would appear to be entirely contradictory in the Chinese mind. Nothing can be accomplished without noise, and the greater the noise the greater the efficiency, or vice versa.

Except in places like Shanghai where foreigners make a fuss about such things, no wheelbarrow in China is ever greased. Wooden axle impinges on wooden hub with unearthly screeches which drive a nervous person frantic. Aside from a certain rythmic repetition of the sounds the effect is that of a rather tired pig caught under a gate. Visitors who seek to learn the cause of things assume a number of reasons, the most common being that the wheelbarrow coolie is poor and does not want to spend any money on precious oil. The simple truth of the matter is that he prefers squeaky wheelbarrows. The noise gives him a sense of accomplishment he cannot otherwise enjoy.

Coolies carrying cargo, pulling a boat up rapids, driving piles or performing any other heavy duties, invariably work to the accompaniment of shrill cries which, in theory, enable them to keep step with each other or co-ordinate their efforts in other ways. But team work is not necessary to inspire these cries. A Chinese coolie alone at the North Pole would not be able to move a cake of ice without making a noise about it. The rhythmic 'Hee haw' of the coolie carrying a burden is one of the most familiar sounds in China. Often the noise they make is so great that one wonders how they have energy enough for anything else.

When the heavy bronze coffin containing the body of the great republican leader Sun Yat-sen was moved to its resting-place in the mausoleum on Purple Hill, near Nanking, a crew of sixty-four coolies was necessary

for the job. As this was a very solemn event to which many official guests were invited, it was obvious that the cries of sixty-four siren-throated coffin carriers would introduce a discordant note into the picture. So for days before the event the coolies were trained to carry an imaginary coffin in complete silence. But when the solemn day arrived the instructions were forgotten. As they lifted the great weight of the coffin the coolies broke into a shrill chorus which completely drowned the ceremonial music. Excited officials had to run up and down the line urging them to be quiet, but they were only partially successful.

Noisy insects add to the joy of life in China. Numerous as pet birds are, they are, in the summer season, outnumbered by caged grasshoppers, cicadas and crickets. There are few so poor that they cannot afford a few coppers for the purchase of these 'chirping brothers' as they are called. A familiar summer sight in any Chinese city, and even on the country roads, is provided by the vendors of these insects, which are housed in small bamboo cages. Chinese find the shrill songs of their insect pets cheerful and pleasing and pamper them with bits of apple or watermelon and, on summer nights, leave them out in the open so that they can drink their fill of dew. Few of them remain in the rough bamboo boxes of the vendor for they are transferred to elaborate cages of bone, polished hard-wood or even ivory. The enjoyment of these pets is short-lived, for they die with the first days of winter.

Not only do the Chinese shout at each other and listen with obvious pleasure to ear-splitting music, but they add to the din of the country with every noise-making device which modern civilisation has brought them. Chauffeurs think they are derelict in their duty if they do not keep horn or siren going at all times the car is in motion. When there is an unavoidable traffic stop the din is redoubled. If motormen had their way about it every tramcar would be equipped with clanging bells which would make it as unnecessarily noisy as an American ambulance. In many cities the rickshas are supplied with bells designed to warn pedestrians out of the way, but they are in constant use even on deserted streets where no one is in sight. The radio has added new horrors to the lives of those who desire peace and quiet. Everyone who owns a radio turns it on full blast and it seldom occurs to him to turn it off before going to bed. It is not at all unusual in cities in the interior to hear a radio blaring away at three o'clock in the morning, and the only person who thinks of objecting is the nervous foreigner who has peculiar ideas about quiet being a necessary adjunct to sleep.

Every occasion in China is celebrated by noise. Each morning it takes millions of firecrackers to get the day started off under proper auspices, and at China New Year and on other festivals the number of firecrackers exploded runs into thousands of millions. Funerals are very noisy affairs. The arrival

of each party of mourners is heralded by strains from an instrument with the voice of a bag-pipe and gongs are beaten at intervals from the time the funeral starts until the last rites have been celebrated. The funeral procession always moves to the accompaniment of music in which the volume of sound is the prime

consideration. If the funeral is that of a wealthy man and the procession a long one, there may be three or four brass bands of foreign style and an equal number of Chinese orchestras with fifes and cymbals. Mournful funeral marches do not meet this requirement of noise so well as American ragtime or military marches. Until a few years ago there were few funeral processions in Shanghai in which one did not hear 'Ta-ra-ra-ra,

Boom de-ay' or 'There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night!' These tunes aroused so much amusement on the part of visitors that municipal action was finally taken to regulate the kind of music played at funerals.

An eminent sociologist has pointed out that in the matter of noise in China, everyone respects the right of the individual to make as much noise as he wants to; but no one respects the rights of the public to a reasonable amount of quiet. Surely the rights of personal liberty could go no further. One is tempted to say that Chinese treasure the right to make a noise as other people treasure the right of free speech.

However, this attitude is changing in Shanghai. Perhaps the stress of life in a big city has brought a realisation of the fact that quiet and rest are important. If a neighbour keeps his radio going at two o'clock in the morning, it is now possible to get relief by complaining to the police. When I made a complaint of that sort the Chinese policeman was so sympathetic that he assured me he would personally 'tear out the radio by its roots' if it caused me any more trouble. It did not, so the radio remained undisturbed but was silent after midnight. At about the same time the complaint of a Chinese resident also spurred the police to action. A shopkeeper who lived next door to the complainant played a gramophone all day long and until late at night. He didn't complain of the noise but he did object to the fact that the owner of the

gramophone had but one record, 'Rainbow on the River', which he played dozens of times a day with no intermissions. The Chinese judge agreed that the complaint was justified and fined the shopkeeper, but agreed to remit the fine if he would spend the money on new records.

Children of all nations enjoy noise and it is only with the sophistication of age that a love of quiet develops. Chinese, in this regard, appear never to grow old, and great-grandfathers gleefully set off strings of firecrackers. This useless device, whose only purpose is to make a noise, was quite fittingly invented in China. The idea of using gunpowder as a murderous explosive came as an afterthought. In the minds of some superstitious Chinese firecrackers serve to drive away any timid devils who may be lurking about; but no matter what may be the reason for setting them off, it always provides a joyous occasion for everyone in the neighbourhood. No one is ever so busy that he cannot stop what he is doing and watch the display until the last disabled firecracker fizzles out. When foreigners give a party they usually try to get everyone in a happy frame of mind by passing trays of drinks. In China the same result is accomplished by setting off firecrackers.

XV

THE FUN OF BEING VERY YOUNG

ONE's first visit to a Chinese schoolroom of the primary grade is likely to be a surprising experience. Here are perhaps a score of small boys, each one reading his lesson aloud and each apparently trying to pitch his voice above that of all the others. To one who has been accustomed to the subdued buzz of an American schoolroom the first impression is that

this is a most nonsensical performance which can only be explained by the fact that Chinese, in everything they do, go counter to the procedure of other countries. But the noisy method of teaching is not so absurd as it appears to be. The primary education of a child who speaks English and one who speaks Chinese present two entirely different problems. In the former case the child must first learn the alphabet and, having learned the sound of the individual letters, it is a natural process to learn the formation, pronunciation and meaning of words. Perhaps at first it is necessary for the American child to learn the sound of words one by one, but his education does not proceed very far before he is able, by looking at the letters of which it is composed, to form a fair idea of the way the word should be pronounced.

The problem faced by the Chinese child is much more difficult. There is no simple alphabet to learn, with words formed by letters which indicate the sound. Instead he must first learn hundreds, and later thousands of Chinese characters whose formation gives some hint of their meaning (similar to the Latin derivatives of English words) but no one can be certain, by looking at it, how a Chinese character should be pronounced. It is necessary to memorise each character separately with none of the aid provided by the alphabet. Chinese pedagogues long ago adopted the simplest and most effective method of teaching the sounds of the characters. First they read them over to

the young pupils until they have learned them and then, before they have had an opportunity to forget them, the pupils read their lesson over and over again and, by shouting the sound of each character, impress it on the memory. The fact that a lot of other youngsters are shouting different words at the same time does not in any way interfere with the lessons and doubtless contributes to the ability to concentrate with which every Chinese seems to be so abundantly equipped. When one has been educated in the bedlam of a Chinese schoolroom, it is not surprising that he should in later life be undisturbed by any noise and bustle going on around him.

In China scholarship has always been an ambition more impelling perhaps than desire for wealth – to which it was often a stepping-stone – but scholarship has never been made easy. There are no nursery rhymes in the schoolroom, no attempts to sugar coat the pill of learning in any way. The child is not gradually led by easy stages to the difficult abstractions of maturity, but plunges into them as soon as he can learn to read. There is for him none of the delightful period characterised by Jack and Jill, Little Red Riding Hood and Mary with her faithful lamb. I can recall, as I suppose most Americans can recall, the resentment I felt when, after having been taught to read through these easy stages, I finally reached the point where I was compelled to memorise Thanatopsis. That was my first intimation that education was not just a lot of

fun. But it is on heavy meat like this that Chinese children are fed from infancy. As soon as a schoolboy learns to write he is set to work copying an essay of which the following paragraph forms a fair sample:

'Fate rules our life. Whether your life is long or short, every one of us has to meet his end in the long run. Ancient writers are correct when they say that life is from the cradle to the grave. How futile it is then for us to have any doubt on this subject. In reading over the writings of people of the past, we find that everyone held the same view on life and death. Though we are living now, we have to give a sigh about our near future as we contemplate our fate. In our hearts, who does not know that life and death are both empty, and that neither longevity nor an early death make any difference?'

The Chinese child has no reading-books designed to entertain him and hold his wavering interest. At a period when children in other lands are reading interesting stories of romance or adventure, he is labouring through the Confucian classics, which are made even duller than necessary by the pedantic annotations of ancient scholars. I can think of no foreign text-book which is not thrilling by comparison. So austere is scholarship that even the reading of romances is frowned upon. The few great novels in Chinese literature were all written under assumed names, because the scholars who wrote them were ashamed to acknowledge their authorship. Even

to-day the writer of romances is not considered to be a wholly respectable person.

With education cast in such a stern mould it is not surprising that the Chinese should come to mental maturity early, and so prepare for the early marriages which are the rule in Chinese life. The idea of a Chinese boy marrying and becoming the head of a family at the age of seventeen does not appear so strange if one realises that the Chinese boy of seventeen is as mature mentally as the young American man of twenty-five. Of course a very large number of Chinese children never see the inside of a schoolroom, but those of the poorer classes soon have the responsibility of earning a livelihood thrust on them and so mature as early as the others.

The oldest son of the family is soon made to realise the responsibility of his position. He is repeatedly told that the five buttons on his little jacket are there to remind him of the five Chinese virtues: benevolence; justice; propriety; wisdom; honesty. His father treats him seriously as the future head of the family and would be embarrassed if seen petting him. The tradition is that the attitude of the father towards his son should always be stern. Not until he has a grandson can paternal feelings find full expression and the grandson is always petted and coddled by his grandfather who lavishes on him the affection he could not, with propriety, show to his father.

The conventions of Chinese life make little or no

provision for the gaiety of childhood but the children over-ride conventions, and while they lead serious lives, they are not necessarily sad. They are as resourceful as children in other lands in devising toys for themselves and in making up their own games. When Confucius was a lad of six he invented an elaborate game in which he and other small boys took the part of officials and played at imitating the elaborate ceremonials of the period. His renowned successor, Mencius, who was born near a cemetery, became so engrossed at playing funeral games that his mother moved to another, more wholesome neighbourhood. Play is just as engrossing to Chinese children as to others and they will not be denied its enjoyment.

A few years ago I established relationships of chummy intimacy with a little beggar girl in Shanghai who established herself permanently in my affections by running after me four or five blocks to return a pair of new gloves which I had dropped. Her face was always unbelievably dirty, which was a part of her stage property as a beggar, but her smile was charming and her eyes were always sparkling with fun. Her serious business in life was begging but when she had a few idle moments she used to build wonderful playhouses out of old tin cans and other rubbish she picked up. I always intended to take her home and have her face washed and watch her eat rice until she could hold no more, but never did it. It is probably too late now,

for the collection of beggar huts in which she lived was destroyed by Japanese bombs and there were few who escaped death.

The routine of life is full of enjoyment for Chinese youngsters. Foreign children look forward to Christmas and to their own birthdays and perhaps to one other national holiday. With the exception of their own personal birthdays, no one of these other festivals or holidays is distinctly dedicated to children, and what enjoyment they get from them is a sort of by-product of the gaiety of their elders. The Chinese child, on the other hand, is the central figure of a whole series of festivals and ceremonial observances. These start on the third day after birth, when he is ceremonially, as well as literally, washed by the midwife, and his older relatives enjoy a feast and felicitate each other on the addition of a new member to the clan. When he is one month old there is another ceremonial event, the shaving of his head, a second occasion for feasting on the part of the older members of his family.

Until he is sixteen years old, and thus usually in fact as well as in theory has passed out of childhood, these ceremonies which are designed to promote his welfare are continued according to a schedule which has been fixed by very old custom. Most of them have a background of superstitious forms which may sound silly when described to the sceptical and unsympathetic Westerner, but they are highly enjoyable to the Chinese youngsters and undoubtedly create very lasting

impressions on them. Many of them are colourful religious ceremonies of the sort any child would enjoy. Taoist priests in costumes which are still gaudy in spite of grime and tatters march endlessly, clang cymbals and blow horns. Candles are lighted and an amazing amount of food is spread on the tables. Parties like

this are frequently occasioned by the illness of a child and I am not at all surprised at the fact that they are commonly reported to be beneficial. Certainly very few children outside of China have ever had an opportunity to enjoy so many good shows. The best Christmas tree entertainment put on by the Methodist

Sunday School would be tame and colourless by comparison.

In recent years small Chinese boys have shown in a very striking way the insistence for childish rights and privileges. A few years ago most small boys looked rather silly and sissified in the effeminate style in which their mothers dressed them. Then all China became enthusiastic on the subject of aviation; but I think the small boys were the first to become 'air minded'. Aviators and aviation mechanics became their heroes and they declined to wear the feminine garments their mothers had made for them. Most of them demanded mannish blue overalls, topped off if possible by an aviation helmet and goggles.

A great deal of affection is lavished on children in China and, in spite of many opinions to the contrary, I doubt very much if the boys are cared for more tenderly than their sisters, although the boys do occupy a much more important place in family affairs. As the future head of the family the eldest son will be called upon to carry out the elaborate rites of clan ceremonial, usually known as 'ancestor worship'. This is a duty that might descend to any one of the sons, making them all potential high priests of the family cult. Under no circumstances can girls take any part in these ceremonies.

Aside from this semi-religious reason for the importance of sons, it must always be remembered that Chinese are an agricultural people with farm tradi-

tions and on farms the world over a son who can till the soil is an asset while a girl is often an expense and a liability. She is almost always a liability in China for as soon as she is grown and thus might become useful, she marries in a neighbouring village and automatically becomes a member of another family. However, I have never been able to see any difference in the way my Chinese friends treat their daughters and their sons. It is quite usual to hear the girls referred to as 'worthless', but that is nothing more than playful teasing and no one takes it seriously but the foreigner who, by translating Chinese terms literally, often gives them an entirely false meaning.

XVI

THE FUTILITY OF SAVING MONEY

With the vast majority of Chinese the demands on their incomes are so heavy and so insistent that they find it impossible to save any money, and few of them ever make the attempt. They are economical in their expenditures but provide a fine example of the

fact that thrift and economy are not necessarily synonymous. A famous British mustard manufacturer is said to have attributed the foundations of his fortune to the mustard which was never eaten but left on the edges of plates. There are many Chinese mustard manufacturers but none of them ever made an extra dollar because of wasted mustard.

Chinese do not save their pennies except to meet some expenditure which must be met in the near future, and very few of them strive to lay anything by for a rainy day. The few who have an opportunity to save usually find the accumulation of savings brings with it a heavy burden of embarrassments. If a man is so much as suspected of having a few spare dollars hidden away, there are dozens of needy relatives who are ready to offer him reasons why he should lend them the money or contribute to the support of some other relative – often with no possibility of repayment.

If it should become known beyond a doubt that he has a large sum of money lying idle in a bank, the pressure brought to bear on the thrifty man is well-nigh overwhelming and only the stoutest can resist it. The result is that if one should be fortunate enough to earn more money than just enough for a bare subsistence, circumstances compel him to become either a spendthrift or to adopt the protective mechanism of a hard-hearted miser. It is well-nigh impossible in this matter of money to attain the happy middle way

which is the Chinese ideal of existence. Neither the spendthrift nor the miser is honoured, but the miser comes in for the greater condemnation. The spendthrift is a lesser menace to society because he has returned to it that which he had taken away.

The age-old custom of New Year bonuses for all employees has been developed and perpetuated in order to meet this absence of regular savings. Although there are some modifications to the New Year bonus system, its main principle is the same all over China. It provides, in most cases, that every employee should receive what is barely a living wage but, in addition, should be given a substantial gift at China New Year, which is the most important of the annual festivals. In the case of domestic servants the gift or bonus usually consists of one month's wages. With employees of business concerns such as banks it is a gratuitous division of profits, which in prosperous years may amount to as much as a whole year's salary.

With this annual bonus to look forward to the individual can and usually does live up to his income without any fear of the fate which is supposed to overtake the improvident. The annual bonus will enable him to pay the small debts which have accumulated, purchase a new suit of clothes and provide at least one brief period of feasts, with plenty of those two prime luxuries, wine and pork. With us Christmas is a children's festival which many older people look on with amused tolerance. China New Year, or as it is

now officially designated the 'Spring Festival' is a period enjoyed by old and young alike. The shops are all closed, no one works and everyone settles down for a few days of joyous feasting. Chinese are a very temperate people and although they drink a good deal of wine it is rare to see one whose face is flushed. The spring festival is an exception for then they become almost like Christian peoples in the excess of their drinking. But they wait for the beginning of the year instead of the end of the week for their mild debauch and as all the feasting and drinking is done inside the homes, one seldom hears or sees noisy and staggering revellers.

When foreigners first came to China they accepted the annual bonus system as just another one of those funny Chinese customs which are more amusing than annoying. Chinese employees were few in number, their wages small. In fact in the early days the foreign business firms had practically no Chinese employees who were directly connected with them. All clerical work and all direct negotiations with Chinese dealers were taken care of by the lordly *compradore* on whose shoulders fell the burden of the bonus as well as payment of the regular salaries of the Chinese staff.

But as foreign firms began to grow in size and more and more Chinese were employed at constantly increasing wages, and the *compradore* began to fade out of the picture, the system has finally become a burden from which all foreign employers would gladly escape,

and a great many have made the attempt. One of the pioneers in this movement was an American company famous for its liberal treatment of employees. This firm, like many others, did not object so much to the expense of the annual bonus system as to the annoyance of having to meet a payroll twice in one month, and the inevitable controversies which would arise as to just who should and who should not get the extra month's pay. There were many other complications. For example, if an employee were discharged within a few months of the time when the bonus became due, he felt a sense of injustice which was shared by all of his friends and fellow-employees and office morale suffered.

With a desire to be perfectly fair in the matter the company worked out a new wage scale in which every employee would be paid only twelve months salary, but at an increased wage which would compensate him for the loss of the extra month's pay. They chose the beginning of the year as the appropriate time to announce the scheme of the new wage scale and found no opposition to it. The employees were delighted at the increased pay they were to enjoy, and as for the bonus, that was a problem which did not have to be faced for another year and so received scant attention.

But when the year rolled round and it became apparent that there would be no extra pay check, the employees found themselves devastated by the shock. It is true that for a year they had been drawing more

liberal salaries than before, but the money was spent; the festival season was on them and they had no money to buy pork, wine and firecrackers. They were not only poor but humiliated by their poverty for this was the season when all others paid their debts, bought new clothing and made merry. In the end the American company had to return to the bonus system and pay the increased salary thirteen times a year instead of twelve. Many other concerns have tried to do away with the system but none has wholly succeeded.

The Chinese government by means of a well conducted postal savings bank and many other devices attempted to teach the people thrift and as a part of their propaganda towards this end discouraged the annual bonus system. The idea was that if the people were required by thrift and self-sacrifice to save the money for the celebration of one great holiday of the year, it would not be the occasion of riotous spending, which it undoubtedly was in the past. However fine that theory may be it did not accomplish any practical results.

Personally I would like to see the bonus system continued. I am sure that wage-earners the world over would be very much happier and would endure their financial worries with a great deal more equanimity if they knew that once a year they would experience a brief period of prosperity. The Chinese have always enjoyed this and I am sure it has been

a powerful factor in enabling them to bear their poverty with a cheerful smile.

The general consensus of opinion of all observers of Chinese life is that the Chinese are a race of gamblers and that opinion is undoubtedly correct. There may be other countries where gambling is more universal, but I have not only never seen one but cannot conceive of one. This is in spite of the fact that no one in China defends gambling; everyone denounces its wickedness and throughout the centuries many officials have attempted to suppress it. Almost everyone in China gambles, but usually on a very moderate scale. The class of reckless and spectacular gamblers who play for very high stakes, like the fabled gamblers of the American mining towns, are very few in number. All games are played for stakes – though usually for very small ones – and there are many lotteries. Children who have a copper to spend for sweetmeats visit the travelling vendor and spin his wheel to see whether they get a small piece of candy or a large one, or a small handful of peanuts or only two or three, but the copper is never entirely lost. I have watched these crude 'wheels of fortune' in operation hundreds of times without seeing one where the child did not get something.

In their attempts to explain this general passion for gambling the missionaries have attributed it to the drabness of Chinese lives, which I think is wrong because the premise of the existence of drab and colour-

less lives is wrong. The missionary, living in an alien land and carrying on his work under the most discouraging circumstances, undoubtedly finds the surroundings drab, but that is no reason why the Chinese should find it so. In every Chinese village the endless round of gossip, the neighbourhood quarrels, the visits of the itinerant monk, pedlar, or the travelling showman with his trained monkey and dog all provide a complete and perfectly satisfactory round of entertainment – satisfactory that is to the only people in any way concerned with it, the villagers themselves. Whether it satisfies the missionaries or would satisfy you or me is not a matter of the slightest importance. Undoubtedly a whirl at the wheel of fortune or the purchase of a lottery ticket does add zest to life, but it is a life which is already zestful.

I am inclined to think that the universal habit of gambling has an economic reason, the same as that which makes the new year bonus a permanent institution. The copper the child can spend for peanuts will not pay for all the peanuts the child wants and the only way a satisfactory supply of peanuts is made possible is by a lucky turn of the wheel. The economic problems faced by the child's father are different only in degree. His income does not allow him to satisfy his needs, even the most pressing ones, and it is only by luck in gambling that he can obtain even temporary relief from financial worries.

XVII

ARISTOCRACY OF THE WASHBOARD

WHEN I first came to China I was, like most other newcomers, shocked and somewhat nauseated by what appeared to be the unspeakable filth of the country. Houses and streets were dirty and clothing was dirty and children's faces needed washing and

most of the streams were muddy. The whole country had an appearance of filth and of a careless disregard for cleanliness and neatness. City and country were equally dirty – the difference being in kind rather than in degree.

In the past few years, thanks to the influence of the New Life Movement, there has been a general tidying up of the country and many conspicuous evidences of filth have disappeared, but the fact remains that most Chinese still live under conditions that many foreigners would find unbearable.

However, cleanliness is all a matter of personal preference which sometimes follows certain national lines. The peasant of France or Ireland, to mention but two examples out of many, could move into a Chinese house and feel very much at home. It is Americans and British especially who make a fetish of cleanliness and find something sinful in the fact that any people can be happy though dirty. Of the many exhibitions of vanity and complacent self-satisfaction which the nationals of these two great countries display, there is none which seems to give more satisfaction than their ability to sneer at a man with a dirty shirt.

As to Chinese cleanliness, my initial surprise that they should be so dirty has, after a quarter of a century, changed to surprise that, considering their difficulties, they should be so clean. For cleanliness everywhere is costly and when expressed in terms of other things, it is probably more expensive in China than in any other

country. Soap costs as much there as in other places and the people have less money with which to purchase it. There are few people in America who would look on a cake of ordinary toilet soap as a luxury, and fewer still who cannot afford to buy cheap laundry soap. But in China there are many who can afford neither. A day's food for a family can be purchased for less than the cost of a bar of cheap laundry soap. If the long blue cotton gown which is the common dress of the country were washed every day, the maintenance cost as represented by the consumption of soap would soon be out of all proportion to the original cost of the gown. A cake of good toilet soap represents a day's wages to a very large proportion of the wage-earners of the country. When confronted by the necessity of a choice between food and soap, the choice is for food, just as mine would be under similar circumstances.

In spite of what appears to be their indifference to cleanliness, every day is wash-day in China. All day long and every day of the week Chinese women and girls may be seen seated beside a rock at the edge of a running stream or a stagnant pool, carefully folding and refolding a number of garments, immersing them in water and then pounding the mass with a stick. They are literally beating the dirt out, and they do a very thorough job of it with a minimum use of soap or often with no soap at all. A thorough cleansing of the garments could be accomplished very much quicker and with very much less effort by the use of

soap, but the cost would be prohibitive. In fact all the clothes in China could be washed with the soap which is wasted in America in order to save a little labour. Only the more prosperous classes in China enjoy the luxury of soap, and the possession of a washboard constitutes a kind of social distinction, being the first step upward in economic progress.

A good many foreigners have commented on the damage this pounding must cause to the garments, but I think it is reasonably safe to assume that if the damage to the fabric was so great as to exceed the cost of soap, there would have been less pounding and more soap years ago. The nation which uses matches as thin as toothpicks because they are less expensive is not likely to pound its clothing to pieces if anything could be saved by using some other method. The truth of the matter is that while this pounding would soon reduce the average foreign garment to shreds, it has little effect on the coarse homespun cotton in which the bulk of Chinese are clothed. A Chinese gown comes as near to being a permanent investment as any article of wearing apparel can well be. If the vogue ever started, many of them could qualify as genuine antiques. As an experiment I once had a shirt made out of Chinese cotton homespun and after a few attempts to wear it I came to the conclusion that no amount of pounding on stones or any other form of laundering could possibly injure the stout fabric of the garment, but might improve its wearability

by making it more pliable and less like a coat of mail.

Cleanliness in China is a matter of dollars and cents just as it is with most other people. Those who can afford it are clean and those who cannot, adjust themselves to a certain kind of filthy comfort. One of the most certain indications of the poverty or prosperity of a district is found in the number of soap shops, and increased soap sales inevitably follow good crops. When crops are bad or there is for any other reason a period when money, which is always scarce, is even scarcer than usual, then the sales of cigarettes and soap both suffer, for these are two luxuries which can only be procured by a cash expenditure. Many a Chinese farmer is often confronted by the cruel dilemma of whether he will buy a packet of cigarettes for himself or a cake of soap for his wife.

Perhaps most of the so-called instincts of the human race, just like the instincts of the lower animals, are based on a certain amount of reason. When it is more comfortable to be clean, as in the tropics, bathing is so universal that cleanliness might be thought to be instinctive. But in the Arctic a layer of dirt, no matter how thin it may be, offers a certain amount of protection not only from the cold but also from lice. An English explorer who had his first bath in Lhassa after months of travel in Thibet found the lice very troublesome. They had not bothered him especially before that.

In my opinion the Chinese desire for cleanliness is just as strong as that of any other civilised people, that they are not only as clean as they can afford to be but much cleaner than you and I might be if cleanliness laid burdens on us which were equally heavy.

Most travellers to the Far East comment on the daily hot bath which is so common to the Japanese, but by no means so universal as it is generally supposed to be. They also note the infrequency with which Chinese bathe and this inevitably leads them to make comparisons which are to the disadvantage of the Sons of Han. The Japanese are a very cleanly race but it would be a very strange and inexplicable thing if they were not a nation of bathers. All along their coastline which, with its thousands of bays and small inlets, is exceptionally extensive, there are innumerable bathing beaches. Many of them are swept by the warm Japanese current so that during a great part of the year millions of Japanese can enjoy a comfortable sea bath by travelling only a short distance from their homes. Inland and scattered through every part of the country there are nearly a thousand separate hot springs, many of them covering a wide area, so that other millions of Japanese have hot baths which cost them nothing at their doorsteps. Finally, in every populated part of Japan there are streams of beautiful clear water.

On the other hand, China has not only few bathing beaches and few hot springs (or springs of any kind

for that matter), but also few streams or lakes in which one can bathe with any degree of pleasure, comfort or safety. The two great rivers, the Yangtsze and the Yellow, are both muddy. The Yangtsze is so muddy that it sullies the water of the sea for many miles; the Yellow so laden with silt that its channel is constantly silting up, causing disastrous floods and frequent changes in its course. It is impossible to look at either stream and think that a bath would contribute to cleanliness. Other streams and lakes have an appearance of purity but the appearance is deceptive. In many of them there lurks the deadly 'liver fluke' or other dangerous germs. Chinese have always wisely avoided them and after a great deal of sickness and several fatalities, foreign residents have also learned to do so. American gunboats cruise the Yangtsze from its mouth near Shanghai to Chunking, 1,400 miles distant, and there is not in this long river nor in any of its tributaries any place where the navy doctors will allow the sailors to swim. The officers of other navies were formerly not so strict but after a few fatalities they adopted similar precautions.

In most parts of China the water available for bathing could be made attractively clean only by filtering or settling with alum and could be made sanitary only by boiling. These precautions take time and money and cannot be afforded by people who are always busy on more important matters than bathing, and always so poor that they cannot spend money on

one thing without stinting themselves on something else. The fuel required to boil a bathtub full of water and so destroy all the dangerous germs would probably be sufficient to cook the meals of a Chinese family for a week. Thus a bath before dinner would be an impossibility, for if there was a bath, there would be no money for dinner. It would appear as if nature, by her stinginess in the matter of fuel and water, had conspired to make the Chinese a bathless race and that they have accepted the situation cheerfully, as they have accepted many other situations for which there appeared to be no help. If the Chinese can bathe, he does so; if he cannot, he doesn't make himself miserable worrying about it.

In spite of all this general indifference to cleanliness I think the prize for persistent and comfortless bathing should be awarded to the farmer in North China. He does not take a daily bath but he takes a sponge bath fairly regularly in what is freezing weather during several months of the year. He has no hot water, no bathroom, probably not a room in the house that is free from the invasion of the wintry breezes. If you wish to try the experiment of the kind of bath he takes, go out to the woodshed, or its modern counterpart an unheated garage, some winter morning with a pail of cold water, a sliver of yellow laundry soap and a small and very thin towel, and take a bath.

It is difficult and in a way rather unfair for anyone who enjoys a daily bath, a daily clean shirt, modern

plumbing and all the other appurtenances of modern civilisation to write about an alien people who enjoy none of these things. I flatter myself that I am not so hidebound as others may be, for I was born in a community where the possession of a privy was something of a social distinction, and bathtubs were unknown.

According to local reports a man living at the county seat twenty miles away changed his shirt daily, and my grandmother's neighbours were in agreement that it must be a very mean and selfish man who would put his wife to such an unnecessary lot of washing and ironing just to gratify a silly whim. Most Chinese would thoroughly agree with my grandmother's neighbours, for with them cleanliness is a luxury and, like other luxuries, the fine edge of its enjoyment should not be blunted by surfeit. Dr. John C. H. Wu, a distinguished Chinese attorney and essayist, writes as follows of his enjoyment of occasional cleanliness :

'Taking a bath in one of the cordial bathing-houses in Shanghai is certainly a great pleasure in life, only a little too aristocratic. One boy rubs your back, another massages your feet with his fingers between your toes, and a third taps and raps lightly all over your body with skilfully trained fists. All you need to do is to lie down comfortably in the bathtub, and let the "back-rubber" wash and rub you clean, as a cook would do to a plucked chicken. In order to show his efficiency, he would gather all the dirt together in the form of thin vermicelli in one part of your body. My

experience tells me that the size of the heap is in direct proportion to the length of the interval between your last bath and the present one. This law applies in normal cases. I have also discovered another law, which I would like to call Wu's law of marginal dirtiness. When you have not had a bath for a sufficiently long period, say a month, your dirtiness has reached its utmost limit, beyond which it refuses to grow. This law is the saving grace of our race. We are not half as dirty as some foreigners seem to imagine. There is such a thing as nature-bath as there is such a thing as nature-cure. I for one prefer healthy dirtiness to finical cleanliness. Many people seem to forget that they are made of dust, and to dust they will return. The great earth doesn't care a damn for your encarmined nails.'

If you wish to know the complete enjoyment of a bath such as that described by Dr. Wu, take a trip on the Trans-Siberian railway, and then soak yourself in a tub in Berlin or Harbin, depending on which is the terminus of your journey. What a satisfaction it is to see in the muddy colour of the water visual evidence of the fact that you are cleaner than you were, to sniff the air and note the absence of an odour with which you were becoming entirely too familiar! The last time I enjoyed a bath like this was ten years ago. A simple mathematical calculation shows that I have bathed thousands of times since then, but that is the only bath that I remember.

XVIII

THE INCONVENIENCE OF HONESTY

OFFICIAL corruption has always existed in China, as it has always existed in all other countries. Whether it was any greater or any less in China than in other countries at any given period of history is an idle question. In no country is there, nor has there ever been, any such thing as perfect official honesty. But whatever the corruption of officials in the former dynasties of China may have been, there can be no doubt but that it reached its greatest, or perhaps it

would be better to say its basest development during that period of alien rule which continued for more than three hundred years until the collapse of the Manchu dynasty in 1911.

Coming from the ruder North, the Manchus were intrigued and tempted by the luxury of China, and their governmental activity was mainly concerned with the collection of taxes and the extortion of official bribes which would enable them to enjoy these luxuries to the fullest extent. According to Chinese history, a wily Chinese prime minister who served under the Manchus deliberately encouraged them in slothful ways of living and in official corruption with the purpose of eventually bringing about their downfall. It was also his suggestion that all Manchu soldiers be given a pension so that they would become soft through idleness.

This Chinese theory that they could destroy the Manchus by encouraging them in graft and easy living proved to be a sound one. It was indeed the corruption of the Manchu government rather than the strength of the revolutionary movement which eventually brought about the downfall of the dynasty. The Manchus were not overthrown; they crumbled to nothingness like a piece of wood which has been eaten by white ants. In the meantime it was not the Manchus alone who had profited by official graft. Chinese officials took their share and any degree of official honesty in the country was so rare that the people

erected monuments in honour of magistrates who were only mildly oppressive in the matter of tax collections.

During all this period of Manchu reign the people were taxed for the sole purpose of providing money for a hungry army of officials and for the support of soldiers who fought no battles. In spite of the high-sounding titles, the numerous boards and the tinsel of government ceremony, the actual government of China consisted of a huge, complicated but highly efficient system of tax monopolies, portioned out to innumerable tax farmers who made the best of the opportunities given to them. The chief tax farmer was the Emperor himself, for on his shoulders lay the responsibility of supporting the ravenous Imperial clan, perhaps the most numerous royal household with which any state was ever burdened. Their requirements came first, and each year it was necessary that a certain number of tons of silver as well as much larger quantities of grain and other produce be remitted to the Palace or sent for storage in the Imperial granaries. This was quite appropriately known as 'tribute'. The offering of tribute was the first and most important duty imposed on the subjects of the country as well as on those of the smaller neighbouring states.

Officials close to the throne, who were charged with collection of the silver, grain and other tribute, divided the task between the different viceroys, taking care that the total required from them should exceed by a profitable margin the amount that they would even-

tually have to deliver to the Emperor. The viceroys in turn demanded remittances from the provincial governors and they in turn called on other officials until it reached the lowest official classification, the district magistrate, on whose shoulders fell the task of making the actual collections from the people. In each gradation of rank there was the same system: collect as much as possible, and remit no more than necessary. I don't think anyone has ever been foolish enough to try to estimate what the total tax bill of China was under this system, but all agree that if it did not equal the maximum amount that it was possible to collect, it was because some one or more officials had failed in the accomplishment of their self-imposed task of making as much as possible out of their transaction.

Although the bottom rung of the official ladder was occupied by the comparatively lowly district magistrate, the actual collection of taxes did not end there. Indeed, so far as the people were concerned, it was with the district magistrate that the impositions began, and after he had taken his toll there were many others to satisfy. The principal and most dependable source of revenue came from the land tax, but there were innumerable others. Land could not be transferred or leases entered into without the payment of fees which in most cases amounted to about ten per cent. Licences were required from every shopkeeper. No pig could be slaughtered without payment of a fee.

Tax barriers were often set up on trade routes which followed canals or rivers and a toll levied on all cargo. *Octroi* was collected at the city gates of Peking.

In each separate classification all taxes were farmed out as concessions – each one comprising a little tax monopoly which the concessionaire was free to exploit to the utmost. He paid a lump sum for the privilege and all he could collect over and above his capital expenditure was so much net gain to himself. It would be impossible to conceive of a system which lent itself more readily to oppression, graft, and official corruption of all sorts.

Of the huge amount collected nothing was spent for the benefit of the people, nor was there any consciousness of obligation to make expenditures for public works. Not a single mile of highways was built by the Manchus, and those which had been constructed by previous dynasties were allowed to fall into such disrepair that they were useless. The natural waterways and the network of canals were allowed to silt up. There was no provision for public education or public health. Thousands of Manchu troops enjoyed comfortable pensions but no money was spent on national defence until the aggressions of foreign nations made this necessary. But only a part of the money appropriated for this purpose went for armaments, for while officials made money in the collection of taxes, they also found profits in the expenditure of official appropriations. Supposedly high explosive

shells were made of wood, machine-gun clips of *papier-mâché*, army shoes of paper. The dramatic climax of these centuries of graft and corruption came when the old Empress Dowager, the last of the long line of Manchu rulers and the greatest of all the tax farmers, built a summer palace with the money which had been earmarked for the building of a navy. A marble boat on a lake in the old palace grounds of Peiping will probably stand for many generations as a monument to commemorate this gigantic theft.

This tradition of graft was the sorry heritage of republican China and it has coloured personal as well as official conduct. During the decade or more that the war lords replaced the Manchus, official corruption did not increase in degree, since increase was impossible, but it did increase in volume and the burdens of the people were heavier than before. In addition to the officials they had millions of soldiers to support – soldiers who would be turned loose by their commanders to pillage and loot unless the cash they demanded was forthcoming. It sounds like a greatly exaggerated story but it is a fact that in one community a few years ago taxes had been paid to a local war lord for forty years in advance. The Manchus had never thought of that, perhaps because they had never been driven to the extremity of compelling one province to support an army large enough for six.

Official corruption appeared to have been so deep-seated in China that it could not be cured and could

be removed only by death, and events have justified that idea. Certainly it was not until most of the older officials who survived the Manchus had died, and a new generation had come to maturity that there was any essential change. The younger generation had been brought up on the revolutionary principles of Sun Yat-sen. This leader's ideas of economies may have been faulty and he had the unfortunate habit of surrounding himself with fools and flatterers, but no one can cast any doubt on the intense fervour of his patriotism, his honesty and sincerity.

These were not new virtues to the Chinese but very old ones, extolled by all the ancient sages and the subject of innumerable pages in the sacred books. There were in Chinese history a good many examples of corrupt ages having been succeeded by periods of high moral tone. The idea of a transformation of this sort was not a new one to Chinese and it was easy for them to think of the corruption of the past as a page out of history and of the future as something which would present an entirely different picture. Their attitude of mind was more like that of the Christian theory of conversion than anything else I can think of. With the establishment of the republic it became the fashion to look on the crookedness and general dishonesty of China as being one of the curses of the long Manchu rule, as an alien rather than a Chinese characteristic.

This shifting of the national responsibility for graft

and dishonesty did not have any immediate results. Indeed the *nouveaux riches* war lords who ruled China for so many unhappy and disappointing years went much farther than the Manchus ever had dared to go. But with the establishment of the National Government, which was dominated by General Chiang Kai-shek, there was a change so definite that it was noticeable even to the foreigners living in Shanghai. There were plenty of stories about officials of the National government who were getting rich through their graft and depositing millions in New York banks. How much truth there was in these stories I do not know, and neither does anyone else.

But one thing was certain; of the money collected in taxes, a large amount went into public works for the benefit of the people – for highways, playgrounds, museums, health service, flood control, street widenings, education, rural rehabilitation; a list of public welfare movements as complete as that of any other country. Millions upon millions of dollars were poured into these projects even at a time when the country was making desperate efforts to prepare for the Japanese invasion which everyone knew could not be long delayed. Perhaps a few million dollars was pilfered by dishonest officials but, except to the academic moralist, what does it matter? For centuries the Chinese paid taxes and got nothing for it. Under the Nationalist government they got a very generous return. The officials may have stolen some but they did not steal

all, which certainly marks a distinct change from the procedure of the former dynasty.

It has been only by a long, tedious and laborious process, in which there were many lapses and some setbacks, that Western nations have developed a moral standard regarding public affairs which is still far from perfect. When one reflects that every dollar which was invested in the public welfare of China during the past ten years might have gone into the pockets of officials, one is tempted to come to the rather startling conclusion that high standards of official morality were developing much more rapidly in China than they ever developed in the West.

XIX

RED DANGER SIGNALS OF SUPERSTITION

A GREAT many foreigners who have spent years in China and enjoyed plenty of opportunities to observe the Chinese people have gone so far as to maintain that the lives of the Chinese are ruled by superstition rather than by reason. A casual reading of Chinese history and an equally casual observation of the everyday life of the Chinese offers a great deal of evidence to confirm that extreme view. Throughout the ancient history of China we read with tiresome repetition of the feudal rulers who ordered their

ministers or soothsayers to go through many a tedious process of divination in order to determine whether or not to attack some rival feudal ruler, or to decide some other important policy. Military operations were frequently halted in the midst of a battle while the soothsayers determined the strategy to be followed. Practically every feudal ruler whose name is recorded in Chinese history is mentioned as having, at one time or another, used this method of arriving at important decisions regarding military matters.

There were several systems of divination, but the favourite one followed by the aristocrats was to burn a tortoise shell and then learn from the cracks in the shell what the fates had in store. The procedure was a very complicated one and the interpretation of the symbols as revealed by the cracked shells was such an intricate matter that few were competent to undertake it. It was entirely too abstruse for the feudal rulers themselves who, being able to employ scholars, did not bother about any scholarship of their own.

I do not know how far other students of Chinese history will agree with me, but my own thoery is that this system of augury was invented, perfected and perpetuated by the officials themselves as an oblique means of controlling the actions of the princes who employed them. With a very few exceptions the latter were an ignorant, bullnecked, purse-proud lot, in whose veins there flowed more of the blood of concubines than of the nobility. Fear was the

strongest emotion they knew and by means of their interpretation of the silly divinations, the scholars who composed the guild of professional politicians managed to frighten the rulers into any policy they approved. Only the clever politician class could interpret the meanings of the cracks in the tortoise shells and this gave them an influence over the princes similar to that which priests have exercised in other ages by use of similar methods.

Incidentally the historical records of ancient China contain some hints that the poor relatives of the officials found profitable employment in the collection and preparation of the shells, thereby making the superstitions serve another useful purpose. As the same class of politicians wrote the histories of the feudal states, they did not give the game away, though they did occasionally have some hot disputes over the interpretation of certain cracks in the scorched bone. One official who lived about the time of Confucius jested with a fellow-politician about the absurdity of the whole procedure.

There is at least one thing to be said in support of my theory, and that is that it explains and makes clear many events in Chinese history which are otherwise hopelessly absurd and confusing. It is also significant that as soon as the feudal system was replaced by a strong central government and the petty feudal rulers lost their power, the system of divination began to die out, for it was no longer useful to the politicians.

According to that portion of Chinese history so ancient that it is supported only by legends, it was formerly customary to marry only inside the tribe, all of whom were related and usually bore the same surname. After many centuries – no one knows how many – superstitious beliefs brought about a change in this custom. This is the only way a change could have been made, for there were very strong reasons why families should wish marriages inside the tribe. Aside from the mutual hostility of the tribes, there was the equally serious matter of social standing, for in that regard few tribes rested on the same footing.

The simple explanation of this change in marriage customs was stated by the ancient historians in a single sentence: 'Marriage among the same surnames is never prolific.' Behind this simple statement must lie the stories of many tragedies, of proud families who sought, by intermarriage, to retain the purity and aristocracy of their blood, only to find after a few generations that the line was dying out. This superstition against the marriage of people with the same surname had an important effect on the social life of the Chinese for centuries before anyone discovered that it was blood relationship and not possession of the same surname that brought about a declining birthrate. The superstition against the marriage of people with the same surname still persists in spite of the fact that all educated Chinese know that it is a matter of eugenics.

In the case of the modern superstitions which everyone who lives in China encounters almost daily, the usual custom of the foreigner is to set them down as nonsense and bother no more about them unless they are troublesome. That was the attitude the foreign doctors used to take towards the nauseous messes prescribed by Chinese doctors until they discovered that some of the silly herbs used by the Chinese had wonderful curative powers possessed by no other medicines. Ephedrine, which is concocted from a weed found in Szechuen province, is the most recent example. For centuries it was known only to the herb doctors of China who surrounded its use with a lot of silly claptrap superstitions, but now it is prescribed by doctors of all nationalities. In the same way a great many of the everyday superstitions which, at first glance appear absurd and silly, will be found to have a basis of sound common sense.

I was once a partner in a farming enterprise in Shanghai. It was a very jolly, clubby enterprise – more jolly and clubby than business-like – for each of the twenty partners was assigned to be responsible for certain farm duties during the weekends. When the individual partner felt like taking care of his duties, he did so and when he preferred to play golf, he did that, with the result that the farm was a conspicuous financial failure but a lot of fun while it lasted. It fell to my lot to take care of the improvement of the land, the building of fences, digging of wells, etc. All of

these tasks were simple and easily accomplished by the usual China Coast method of turning them over to a capable Chinese assistant and in that way I got rid of most of them with no inconvenience and great credit to myself. But the digging of the well presented strange difficulties. It developed that its location had to be decided by geomancers, for if these psychic diviners did not give it their seal of approval, evil spirits might be aroused, the land would not produce good crops, and we would be blamed for any bad luck the neighbouring villagers might suffer.

We were not worried about the location of the well affecting the prosperity of the vegetables we proposed to grow, for we were all of us rather confident of our abilities as farmers, but it was very important for us to keep the good will of the villagers. If news got about that we had dug a well in a spot that was not approved by the geomancers, trouble was sure to follow. At the same time we had very decided ideas as to where the well should be located and my partners saddled on me the job of getting the geomancers to go through their noisy and colourful ceremonies and then locate the well on the spot predetermined by ourselves.

I said nothing to my partners about the strategy I proposed using but I assured the Chinese land agent who employed the geomancers that I would, regardless of their decision in the matter of the well, pay their usual fee. But I also confided that I had made a wager with one of my partners that the geomancers

would locate the well within a few feet of a certain spot (which I marked) and that if I were lucky enough to win the wager I would certainly spend part of the money on a feast for the geomancers and the estate agent. My approach to the problem of the location of the well might be said to be a fine example of the oblique mentality and devious methods one acquires through long life in China. Anyway it sounded reasonable to all concerned and on the eventful day the geomancers wandered all over the farm with their divining rods and other mysterious paraphernalia, but in the end I won my imaginary wager and gave the feast.

The digging of the well disposed of all of my pressing responsibilities in connection with the farm except one, and that proved much more troublesome. Included in one of the many small plots of land we had leased was a temporary grave which, like all temporary graves in this part of China, consisted of a Chinese coffin above the ground enclosed by a wall of bricks and covered by a tile roof. It is in this way that many coffined bodies are disposed of until the family is able to make arrangements for the more expensive permanent burial.

The terms of the lease had clearly specified that this coffin was to be removed by the owner of the land but like most contracts in China, this one was rather flexible and there was no definite undertaking as to the exact time of removal. Every time I went out to the

farm and saw the grave I raised the devil about it, using the only argument I could think of, which was: 'Eventually, why not now?' But as the word eventually covers a lot of chronology in any language and may encompass centuries in the Chinese, I got nowhere. As summer came on and visitors began flocking to the farm by the hundreds, my partners started making life a burden to me. They insisted that I get some action – and at once – for it was obvious that our customers would not like the idea of buying lettuce which had been born and bred in the shadow of a Chinese grave.

Matters then came to a showdown between the Chinese agent and myself. He listened patiently to my blustering and ferocious ultimatum and then explained in great detail that it was very unlucky to move a coffin except at one season of the year, which fell in midwinter. He insinuated very politely his mild surprise that one who had lived as long in China as I had would not be familiar with such a well-known fact. I declined to be impressed. Proud of the way I had managed to get the well located where I wanted it, a scheme in which the agent had taken an equally questionable part, I felt quite justified in saying with great impoliteness:

'I know and you know that all this talk about lucky days for moving graves is a lot of nonsense. There is no luck about being dead or being in a coffin and it is no unluckier to move a coffin in July than in January.'

He waited patiently until I was through, and then said:

'Have you ever moved a corpse in hot weather?'

I not only had no more to say but felt that I had said far too much already. When I thought of the gruesome possibilities I was revolted by the very idea of moving the coffin through the rows of our impeccable vegetables. So we planted vines over the coffin and it remained there until midwinter when, at the proper season of intense cold and bare garden beds, it was removed without doing violence to any silly Chinese superstitions and without scattering any bones over the heads of lettuce.

So far as I know, Chinese do not attach any significance to the fact that a bird flies into a window. But it is a prosperous omen for a stray dog or a stray cat to wander into a house; while for a pig to come in as an uninvited guest is just the reverse. A Chinese friend says the reason for this is perfectly obvious. The keen nose of a hungry dog will invariably lead him to the house where plenty of food is available and for a more complex reason, the smart and always selfish cat will attach itself to a place which the rats have already found to be a pleasant and comfortable dwelling-place because of the food they are able to steal. On the other hand, it must be a very poverty-stricken and tumbledown shack into which a timorous pig would wander. The presence of cockroaches in a house is also evidence of a portent of prosperity. It stands to

reason that a household which cannot feed a family of cockroaches must be very poor.

As a matter of fact, this question of the presence or absence of cockroaches in a Chinese home is purely academic, for no household is so poor that it does not shelter them, usually in considerable quantities. The only possible exception should be the modern Shanghai apartment, constructed with all the skill of the architect and engineer and equipped with all the modern sanitary appliances; but they are usually found even here. One would think that cockroaches would find this an inhospitable country and that after their thousands of generations of life in rural China they would be unable to survive the rigours of metropolitan life. But quantities of them are to be found in the apartments located on the eighth floor and above, heights which should frighten any China-bred cockroach with rural traditions.

Once a year the kitchen god comes down to every home in China to make an inspection and report on the poverty or prosperity of the household. A waggish Chinese friend once told me that the modern apartment into which he was moving was so sanitary that he was sure no cockroach could live in it, and that he thought he had better borrow a few before the annual visit of the kitchen god, as otherwise there would be consternation in the Chinese heaven over the discovery that there was one family in China too poor to provide food for a cockroach.

All house cats in China are fed only twice a day. Their most generous meal is at breakfast when they get all the fish scraps left over from the family supper, provided the cat is fortunate enough to belong to a prosperous family which eats fish for supper. This is followed by a rather meagre meal at noon, but they get nothing after that for it is very unlucky to feed a cat at night. This superstition is arrived at by the inverse process of reasoning that it would be very fortunate for the rats to feed a cat at night because with his belly full of food, the cat would have at best only a minor interest in catching rats. Therefore it is unlucky to feed cats at night as they would go to sleep and catch no rats.

The range of Chinese superstitions is wide, embracing every human activity from the planting of seed rice to the burial of a deceased relative. Many of them are agricultural and are supposed to embody the wisdom of the ages in regard to farming. Some of these are strikingly similar to the farm superstitions to be found in other countries. Others quite obviously go back to the primitive days of barbarism when all religion was animistic, as Chinese religion still is to a certain extent. In the entire category of superstitions these are the most inexplicable and cruel for they are bound up with a belief in witchcraft. They are interesting but unimportant because they are believed in by so few.

On the other hand there are a great many which

are as sensible as the one decreeing that it is unlucky to move a coffin in the hot weather or to feed a cat at night. For example, it is considered to be very unlucky to drink water. This is a superstition which is taken seriously by all country people. Chair coolies who are famishing with thirst will do no more than rinse their mouths from a well or a wayside stream, and drink nothing until they can get a pot of tea. This is one of the most sensible superstitions. Almost all surface water in China is heavily contaminated by dangerous germs and to drink it is risky. These germs are killed by boiling the water for tea, so that while fresh water is dangerous, tea is harmless.

While most of the magnificent trees to be seen around the lower Yangtsze Valley are to be found on temple property, there are many on land which is privately owned. Some have thrived through generations and survived many hungry years when, by cutting down the trees and selling them for firewood, the owners could easily have relieved themselves of distress. They did not do so because of the superstitious belief that the tree harbours a spirit which might avenge itself if disturbed. Brushwood provides enough fuel, the trees are preserved and the country is beautifully wooded.

Sometimes one is tempted to believe that the ancient sages of China, realising that it is easier to arouse the superstitious fears of a people than it is to appeal to their reason, deliberately adopted that method of

inculcating sound lessons regarding the conduct of all manner of affairs. While a great many superstitious beliefs sound silly and absurd, there are many others which on closer examination are found to have a solid foundation of good common sense and have served and continue to serve a very useful purpose. When I have

sought long enough I have usually been able to find some kind of sensible explanation for the existence of any Chinese superstition that aroused my curiosity. The explanation was not always reasonable or plausible but at any rate it was an explanation. I cannot say that much about the superstitions of other people with whom I am familiar. I have studied hundreds of Chinese superstitions but have never run across one so entirely absurd and inexplicable and so generally

accepted as the idea that it is unlucky for thirteen people to sit down at table together.

After all there are so many problems one faces even in a single day that no one has time to sit down and figure them all out and come to his own conclusions, even if he has the necessary knowledge and mental equipment. So convention becomes a matter of convenience if not of necessity, and superstition is only another form of convention in so far as it constitutes a rule of conduct; here a red light of danger, there a green light of safety and there a yellow light of caution. Occasionally one may pass the red light with no danger to himself and thereby gain something over his more cautious fellows. But in the long run it doesn't work. Try it once too often and you will either be run over by another car or nabbed by a traffic policeman. Chinese have found a measure of safety and security and confidence in their superstitions and will give them up with great reluctance.

XX

THE LAND OF FLOWERS AND SUNRISES

WHEN one introduces the subject of sunrises into a conversation it is, in almost every instance, looked on either as a vague attempt to be humorous

or as an opportunity for witticisms. To the average person the mention of a sunrise suggests but one thing, a late and riotous night, ending with a homecoming which coincides with the visit of the milkman. In fact, the picture of the rising sun has finally become a stock convention in comic art. When Jiggs is shown against a background symbolic of dawn we know that he has been out all night and that Maggie is probably waiting for him with a rolling-pin. Many Americans have never seen a sunrise under any other circumstances with the possible omission of Maggie.

Only a brave man or a fool would attempt to talk about sunrises in the smoking-room of a Pullman car or in the bar of any club. Among the very few who will talk seriously on the subject are those who have torn themselves away from the glamours of Hollywood long enough to see dawn break over Mount Wilson; or those who have travelled even farther to see the sun rise over the Himalayas from Darjeeling. Others are proud to tell of having seen the sun rise beyond the Arctic Circle in the 'Land of the Midnight Sun'. I once witnessed that disappointing sight myself, seeing a sickly looking orb sink behind the horizon about midnight and crawl shamefacedly above it an hour later. Americans must have their sunrises dramatised for them and made unusual and expensive. More than nine-tenths of these who at great expense and trouble see the sun rise once from Darjeeling or Mount Wilson or from the Arctic, come home

and sleep through sunrises for the rest of their lives.

On the other hand, almost any educated Chinese will talk to you about sunrises not only with appreciation but with enthusiasm. And around every Chinese city with any claims to scenic beauty there are certain to be one or more particular spots which are pointed out by local city boosters as places where one can see the sun rise to the best advantage, just as there are spots from which to view the full moon. Some sunrise views are famous throughout the country and sedentary Chinese will travel far and uncomfortably to visit these places. Often you can choose your sunrise from a variety of settings. At one spot you can see the dawn through willows and bamboos. At another the sun comes up against the purple of the hills or silvers the dark surface of a lake.

I got up very early one winter morning and climbed to the top of a hill overlooking beautiful West Lake at Hangchow, for the sole purpose of seeing the sunrise from one of these famous spots which had been immortalised by a Chinese poet a thousand years ago. I must admit that it was not so much a love of beauty that made me get out of a warm bed and clamber up through the snow as it was a kind of journalistic curiosity to see whether or not the ecstasies of the Chinese poet were justified. By the time I got to the top of the hill my feet were cold and I was sceptical, but my scepticism vanished with the dawn. I was

glad that I had made the climb as the curtain lifted and the beauty of the scene began to be revealed. The distant river became a silver ribbon, the hills changed from black to purple, then to mauve and pink, before the sun brought out their daytime colours of brown and green. A few stray bits of fog which had been caught in the valleys shyly tiptoed from place to place before the sun drove them to cover, and they seemed to merge with some isolated low-lying clouds.

It was so bewilderingly beautiful that only hunger made me tear myself away, and when I finally got back to the hotel I found my travelling companion, who was also a customer, waiting breakfast for me.

'Where the hell have you been?' he said. I started to tell him but suddenly realised that an advertising agent has no business chasing off at an unearthly hour to look at sunrises and staying there so long that he leaves an important client waiting breakfast. So I offered the more plausible explanation that my stomach had been a little upset and I had gone out for some exercise so as to work up an appetite.

After that every time I thought I had an appreciative listener I mentioned this sunrise and kept it up until I began to feel that I had some proprietary rights in it. I gave it a sensible and practical presentation by pretending that I was trying to promote it as a tourist attraction which would add to the number of visitors to that most beautiful city of Hangchow. I used my best salesmanship, pointing out that the famous

Darjeeling sunrise, which it cost thousands of dollars to see, might be bigger but could not possibly be more beautiful; that the midnight sun was a perfect flop; that this Hangchow sunrise had been famous for many centuries and was easily accessible, only five hours by train from Shanghai. I not only failed to work up any enthusiasm but people were so obviously bored that I finally quit talking about it. I am sure many of my friends thought I was a little queer, and may still think so.

One night at a Chinese dinner in Shanghai I happened to mention Su Tung Po, who had written a poem about the West Lake sunrise. The silk merchant from Hangchow with whom I was talking told me the history of the little pavilion marking the spot where Su Tung Po sat when he wrote the poem, the pavilion which had been the objective of my winter morning climb. He was the first person I had met with whom I could talk about my enjoyment of the dawn over West Lake. He had seen the sunrise from this spot not once, as I had done, but dozens of times. Another Chinese merchant at the table told me that he had, over a period of forty years, seen the sunrise from this spot on many occasions, but he contended that if I had climbed a little higher and walked a few hundred yards to the north I would have seen a spectacle far superior to the one I had witnessed. This provided an interesting subject for controversy for the first man stuck doggedly to his preference for the

orthodox sunrise of the Sung poet which I had seen. And we spent a pleasant hour, though I was a listener rather than a participant, for I realised that when it came to sunrises I could speak with no authority.

Anyone who visits Hwang Shan (Yellow Mountain), one of the most famous of the many famous beauty spots of China, must be impressed by the tremendous amount of labour which has been expended in order to make the forbidding crags and peaks of the mountain accessible to travellers. For mile after mile roads have been laid out along the steep slopes of the mountain and over the greater part of the distance the route has been paved with heavy stone slabs whose number runs into the tens of thousands, each one representing several days of labour. About twenty miles of 'roads' climb from an elevation of 2,000 feet to 7,000 and it is rare to find a level stretch of 50 feet. At places long stairways have been carved out of the living rock. Chasms have been bridged with great labour and rest-houses built on the tops of peaks which would appear to be inaccessible to the most experienced and venturesome mountain climber.

Great feats of labour like this have been accomplished elsewhere under the urge of religious devotion, as shown by many cathedrals in Europe and the elaborate temples located in the sacred mountains of China. But Hwang Shan is not, and has never been, a place of even ordinary fame as a mountain of any religious importance. The breath-taking beauty of

the place first attracted the attention of Buddhist monks who set up a monastery here, but as a religious establishment it never prospered and was never visited by the pilgrims who throng to hundreds of famous temples throughout the country. The many visitors come to the place because of its beauty and not because of its sanctity. The small Buddhist temple provides support for less than a dozen monks.

The glory of the place – the objective of the pilgrimage – is the sunrise seen from the top of the highest peak. The way there has been made as easy as possible, but a large part of the route is so steep that the mountain chairs cannot be used and the traveller pulls himself up hundreds of steps with an angle of more than 45 degrees. A dozen round trips up and down the stairways of the Empire State Building would be quite easy compared to the climb of Lotus Peak, where visitors spend the night. Yet every day when the roads are not made impassable by ice or rain the mountain is visited by Chinese beauty lovers who spend the night in an uncomfortable monastery, and at dawn the monks call them to see the sunrise.

The significant fact about Hwang Shan is that all the prodigious labour which makes its peak accessible was expended on it solely for the purpose of making it possible for the public to enjoy its beauty spots and without any idea of gain, direct or indirect, on the part of anyone.

Sunrises, sunsets, the full moon, fogs, rain pelting

against the bamboos, wild ducks in flight – these and a thousand other manifestations of beauty are looked on by Chinese as beneficent gifts of nature which they should enjoy to the utmost. Their artists have always portrayed simple things like these. Chinese have a very keen appreciation of the work of artists, but they have an even greater appreciation of the beauties of nature which artists depict. No picture of a grove of bamboos can be so beautiful as the grove itself and while they may admire the skill of the artist, they do not forget that nature is the supreme artist and man is but a copyist. While we frame pictures and hang them where they can be seen to their best advantage, they do the same thing in a different way by the careful selection of sites from which the best views of natural beauties can be seen. If a Chinese gentleman has a country estate or a private garden, he will naturally expect any guest to inquire the location of the best spot from which to view the full moon, or the rising sun.

The idea that China is a land where love of beauty is a predominant characteristic is one which the casual visitor would find very difficult to accept and even more difficult to understand. The impression which a large part of the country must give to the traveller is one of dreariness, monotony of colour, and no more beauty than might be found in any mud wall or ploughed field. In the flat country around Shanghai there are the innumerable grave mounds or the

hideous bricked-up cubicles where coffins are deposited waiting for permanent burial. The farm villages with their weathered walls, thatched or grey-tiled roofs, dirt roads which are mud puddles in rainy weather offer no hint of colour, only a drab monotone which often drives the foreign exile to a homesickness so poignant that it borders on despair. Farms in China lack the beauty to be found in farms in other countries because there are no meadow lands or orchards.

The most important canals and rivers are muddy and one may travel miles before seeing a native boat which does not have the appearance of age and decay. The sails are of dull coloured rattan, unless they are of old Seattle flour sacks, greyed by the weather and usually full of rotted holes. In the cities the streets are narrow with but few open spaces and the householder rarely makes any attempt to beautify the outer wall of his residence, or even to keep it in decent repair.

It is probably because of the drab and colourless surroundings in which most of them live that Chinese are so fond of red. It is the favourite colour for infants' clothing, also for the clothing of old men who have reached their second childhood. When bill-posting coolies are putting up brightly coloured posters in the interior, it is not unusual for people to ask them to put the posters on their wall or even in their houses. The garish hue of the poster adds a

delightful touch of colour in the streets of a Chinese village, becomes in the eyes of the villagers a thing of beauty.

The visitor from Mars, if he made the casual inspection which the theoretical visitor from Mars is generally supposed to make, would inevitably come to the conclusion that this was a land of unrelieved sadness, in which love of beauty did not exist and where gaiety and laughter would be a ghastly mockery. But the visitor would be wrong, as are most human tourists. On this muddy canal is one of the meanest of boats, typical of the thousands of humble craft which ply the rivers of the country. It is a flat-bottomed affair about eighteen feet long and not more than eight feet wide. On it live, from one generation to another, a family often consisting of as many as six people who make their living by catching fish which have survived the skill of five thousand years of industrious fishermen. The boat is a residence, a workshop, and a farmyard combined. A couple of ducks, their legs securely tied so that they cannot stray away, swim about in the radius of their tether. A few chickens roost in a coop on the top of the boat. Room may also be found for a small pig in a pen which is located aft. It is all drab and utilitarian with the stern utilitarianism of poverty, though the boatman and his family have a home and employment and do not look on themselves as being poor.

One furnishing of the boat which is as universal as

the pig, the ducks and the chicken, even one might say, as the rudder itself, is a pot containing a flowering plant. The pot is obviously frequently changed, for at almost all seasons of the year it will be seen that it contains a plant which is in bloom. Flowers are universal in China – as universal as the filth which every visitor notices. A pot of flowers will be found growing in the meanest of homes, even in the miserable beggar huts which are built of scraps and are hovels of unspeakable poverty. It is probable that in most cases the beggar stole the flowers – but in what other country would a beggar steal a pot of flowers, not because he wanted to sell them, but simply because he wanted a pot of flowers?

At least one flowering shrub is to be found in every farmyard. The visitor who drives by in a motor-car may not see them for they are planted by the farmer for the sole enjoyment of himself and his family and may not be visible from the road. Usually there are several which bloom at different seasons, and each shrub occupies the attention which might be given over to the growing of beans or to a mulberry tree which would help to feed some profitable silkworms. In the cities the courtyard constitutes the unit around which the residences of the prosperous are built and if this courtyard can possibly offer hospitality to a shrub, it will be found there. Often the hardy coxcomb is planted so that it will grow between the cracks in the courtyard tiles. If nothing will grow, then pots of

flowers or shrubs will be brought in and replaced as often as necessary. It is rare to find a Chinese of any degree, farmer or city dweller, who does not own flowers and take great pleasure in talking about them and discussing the best growing methods.

In every town there is a good market for flowers and the purchasers are not, as in other countries, confined to women who want to decorate a dinner-table or to romantic young men with other motives in view. One of the commonest sights in China is a middle-aged gentleman carrying home a sprig of flowers or a flowering shrub. Flowers are always on sale where food can be bought, for the housewife who does her own marketing may buy the pork or fish first but she will rarely go home without a purchase of flowers. Here, as in other things, they are careful purchasers. Flowers are cheap in China and the foreign *memsahib* will descend on a flower shop and depart with her ricksha loaded with blossoms enough to attract attention when spread about her drawing-room or arranged on the dining-table. The Chinese purchaser of flowers will be content with one or two sprays, but these will be selected with infinite care.

The geranium in the tomato can, or the rubber plant in the apartment hallway have been for years the American symbol of a rather futile search for beauty, useful as literary props because representing the unusual and the slightly tragic. They would excite no comment in China except perhaps derision that any

aesthetic satisfaction could be found in a flower so vulgar as a geranium, or that a country could be so poorly supplied with flower-pots that anyone would find it necessary to use a tomato can. As for rubber plants, I doubt if there is one in all China.

There are undoubtedly more pet birds in China than in all the rest of the world put together, for birds and flowers are placed in the same category. It would be but a slight exaggeration to say that there is a flower-pot and a bird-cage in every home. Chinese are florists and they are also expert in the care of birds, lavishing on them an amount of attention that is amazing. The foreigner who takes early-morning walks in China will find men of all ages giving their birds their morning exercises, that is a half-hour in fresh air and sunshine. In a part of Shanghai which was destroyed by Japanese bombs, a whole section of the city embracing several blocks was given over to the sale of birds and their accoutrements. The fittings of cages and the variety of food offered for sale cannot be duplicated in any other country. In China a fine bird may be known by the elegance of his cage. And what pampered pets they are! Rotten twigs in which worms are found are gathered by the farmers and find a ready sale to bird owners at fancy prices, for the thrush and the lark enjoy plucking these worms from the wood. It is the Chinese equivalent of giving a bone to the dog.

In America it is rare to find anyone with any

appreciation of the beauty of typography and by far the greater number of these have a professional interest, being connected in some way with the graphic arts. In China, on the other hand, every educated man is interested in calligraphy and finds beauty in the formation and style of the Chinese characters. What a revolutionary progress would be made in the art of printing and the making of books if there were a similar widespread interest in typography in America and an appreciation of the beauty of the printed page!

The artist in America leads a rather precarious existence unless he can get a job with an advertising agency or become a magazine illustrator. The Chinese artists who earn a living in this way probably do not number more than a few hundred, yet there are thousands of artists who are profitably employed. On the occasion of weddings, birthdays, establishment of a new business or the removal of an old one, it is customary to send congratulation scrolls, and in the writing of these the artists find fairly steady employment. Stationery shops which sell the paper, brushes and ink, act as agents for the artists, book the orders and collect the payments.

Famous artists charge very high prices, and on their death the scrolls they have painted become collectors items and the prices go still higher. A few who can afford to do it have a method of defeating fate and enjoying posthumous honours while still alive. At a certain age, usually sixty, they throw away their

brushes and will paint nothing more. A friend of mine made an announcement of this sort five years ago. He is still hale, hearty and active. Nothing could

induce him to paint a scroll and he enjoys the pleasure and satisfaction of seeing those he has painted become more and more valuable.

Chinese like sunrises, flowers and birds, and they also

like gaiety and laughter. Life for them has always been such a serious and sombre business that they had either to laugh at it or to sink under the weight of despair. Under very similar conditions the virile and intelligent Koreans adopted as their permanent costume the white gown of mourning, and so after a few sad centuries became a slave nation, without hope, as extinct a race as it is possible for a nation to be while some of its representatives are still living. Chinese have chosen to laugh instead of to weep, to enjoy to the full the beauty found in simple things; and China is one vast reservoir of love of beauty, laughter, and an optimism which nothing can daunt.

XXI

GHOSTLY DEPARTMENT STORES

In every city of any size in China will be found a number of shops engaged solely in the manufacture and sale of furnitute and other articles for use in what might be called the Chinese heaven. In smaller places a single establishment will be given over to this

business, but no matter where one is living, furniture for ghosts is always just as easily procurable as furniture for the living, and the demand is just as constant. All of these articles are made of tissue paper and bamboo and are of no conceivable value or utility on this earth but are believed to constitute good sensible presents which any ghost would be glad to receive. After the articles are bought they are transmitted to the celestial sphere by the simple process of burning them either before the tomb or the ancestral shrine of the deceased. It is assumed that with the disappearance of the objects in the flames they reappear in more substantial form in the other world. If one prefers to make presents in cash and let the ghostly ancestor do his own shopping one can buy imitation paper money in a number of different forms.

In Shanghai there are several hundred establishments which cater to the needs of the departed. They kept on doing business during the months that Shanghai was under bombardment for, like undertakers, they thrive on the calamities of others. Except for the fact that it is confined by the limitations of the retail shop the manufacture and sale of ghostly furniture is in many ways a very satisfactory sort of business for one who has small capital. No mechanical equipment is needed aside from scissors, a knife, a pot of paste and a paint brush and a stock of paper and bamboo. Paint is used rather lavishly but a dollar's worth of water-colours would be enough to decorate

all the furniture in the most populous parts of paradise. There is a steady demand for ghost furniture which is not upset by seasonal depressions, and an occasional windfall in the shape of a huge contract, as on the occasion of the funeral of some wealthy old man who has lived comfortably in this life and is presumed to have carried his luxurious tastes beyond the grave.

There is nothing sacred about the manufacture of these ghostly furnishings; no priestly sanctions are necessary and the business is open to anyone who wants to engage in it. The only formality one has to go through is to take out a retail shopkeeper's licence, just as one would have to do if he went into the business of selling picture frames. The articles do not have to be blessed by a priest or receive any other ecclesiastical approval or endorsement. On the whole, Chinese have given their Taoist and Buddhist priests very generous support, but they have never allowed them to make a racket out of religion by setting up customs barriers on the road to heaven or by establishing what might be called religious trade monopolies of any sort. Any shop can sell temple equipment, including a wide assortment of gods, and any wood carver can make them.

All ghostly furniture is now hand made and there does not appear to be any opportunity for machine production, but if some manufacturing genius were to produce a satisfactory class of articles at a cheaper price, he might make a fortune by going into this line

of business. It is one manufacturing enterprise in which the proprietor does not have to increase the quality of his products in order to meet competition and then live in fear that he has made his product so durable that he will go bankrupt while waiting for the sale of replacements. That problem never arises and the more flimsy and inflammable the articles are, the better is the manufacturing job. Since the articles are transferred to the other world by being burned, it stands to reason that the conflagration should be a complete one. If a table intended for the comfort of Grandfather Wong should be consumed but for one leg which escaped the flames, the presumption would be that grandfather's ghost would have a rickety piece of furniture and might quite justifiably be irritated about it.

This custom of ghost shops had its origin in the human sacrifices which China inherited from a barbaric past and continued to observe up to about the beginning of the Christian era. When a great man died, especially a king or a feudal ruler, the custom was to bury him with his concubines, secondary wives, servants, horses together with chariots, and other physical possessions which he had found useful in this world and might feel the need of in the next. This led to the sacrifice of a great many lives. On the occasion of the death of the first emperor to rule all of China, in the third century B.C., the human sacrifices ran into thousands, and his tomb was so elaborate that

stories about it travelled for thousands of miles and formed the basis for one of the Arabian Nights Tales.

This was the last of the great sacrifices of this sort, for even before that time public opinion had been aroused against it and the wholesale slaughter which followed his death horrified the country and served to put an end to the custom entirely.

The idea of leaving their loved ones alone in the other world was repugnant to the Chinese, so small clay images were substituted for the living sacrifices. To this custom we owe the graceful little figures of gay dancing girls, gallant horses, and other carefully modelled objects which are to be found in museums and the homes of fortunate or wealthy collectors. Many of those which are dug up to-day have been buried in tombs for a thousand years or more.

Following the substitution of clay images for human sacrifices, the next development was the making of paper objects which could be burned, along with paper imitations of the lumps of silver which constituted the legal tender of the period. I believe there is, from the Chinese point of view, a sound reason why images of persons and animals should be buried and these paper and bamboo gadgets should be burned, but I have forgotten what it is. It appears probable to me that while humanitarian reasons led to the making of clay images to replace the sacrifices of concubines and horses, very probably economic reasons led to the making of imitation paper money and

other material objects by those who could not afford to buy the more expensive clay images. It was natural that they should be burned, for that method of disposal exactly suited the Chinese, who have a flair for the theatrical, and certainly a bonfire is more dramatic than a burial.

The burning of paper money was also a development from an older custom. In the coffins of the wealthy it was customary to bury precious objects – jade, diamonds, pearls, and priceless porcelains. When the old Empress Dowager died in the early part of this century, the jewels buried with her were worth millions of dollars and greatly enriched the grave robbers who rifled the tomb a few years ago. Poorer people had no gems or precious metals to bury and so there came into vogue the inexpensive custom of burning paper imitations of money.

Even in their most fanciful ideas Chinese are always practical minded, and the ghostly imitations of money have closely followed all changes in Chinese currency. Until rather recently China had no coins except those of copper or brass of insignificant value. The most important medium of exchange consisted of lumps of silver moulded in uniform shape and know as *sycee*, each lump being officially stamped to show the authentic weight and fineness. During this period all ghost money consisted of paper imitations of these lumps of silver. Occasionally a few paper imitations of lumps of gold were burned but this, owing to the extreme

scarcity of the yellow metal, was a rather pretentious offering, doubtless intended to impress neighbours and spectators.

A few centuries ago foreign traders brought in barrels of Spanish and Mexican dollars with which to pay for tea, silk and other Chinese products. Soon thereafter paper imitations of these coins were made for use at funerals, though after some hesitation, for the Chinese were suspicious of foreign currency. Still later, bank notes issued by the foreign banks of Shanghai began to circulate and ghostly bank notes were printed, though neither the imitations of silver dollars nor the bank notes were ever so generally used as the imitation *sycee*. As silver dollars were often counterfeited and banks which had issued notes sometimes failed, Chinese always held them in cautious esteem and put their trust in the solid lump of silver which carried its own guarantee of value and could not be tampered with. By a curious twist of logic the ghost money was judged by the same standards. However, there is still a steady sale for the silver dollars and the ghostly bank notes. The latter are printed in denominations of $100. They sell for little more than the cost of printing so that the expenditure of only a few dollars can make a deceased ancestor a millionaire.

The ghostly articles of furniture have always followed changes in styles and are quite complete in their variety. Every shop making these articles is a small

department store in itself, though it may be, as it usually is, no larger than the usual Chinese shop with a frontage of twelve feet. It is remarkable what can be packed in this small space. There are, of course, tables and chairs, perhaps a couch if the dead man had been accustomed to his opium pipe. Chests are packed with paper clothing for all seasons and occasions. And other more intimate things, such as wash-basins, urinals, and the Chinese equivalent of a chamber pot. As modern inventions make life on earth more luxurious, these comforts, by means of paper replicas, are made available to the dead. They now include such things as telephones, electric heaters, electric fans, ice boxes, lamp shades, thermos bottles, and sometimes a motor-car. These larger objects are not stocked owing to the limitations of space but are made to order. Radios are quite common and doubtless aeroplanes will be added when private flying is developed in China. The last two items would not appear unnecessary to Chinese since they have no conception of angels who fly about with their own wings and play on golden harps.

Chinese ghosts have always been up-to-date. The little clay images of dancing girls, which have been buried for centuries, show the styles of their period, for they were always dressed in the latest fashion. A complete collection of them with dates of the tombs from which they were taken would enable one to reconstruct completely and accurately the history of

the feminine styles of China in dress and make-up for a period covering more than a dozen centuries.

When Japan began her invasion of China, the manufacturers of ghost furniture found a new use for their art. They constructed life-size imitations of aeroplanes and armoured tanks and left them about in rice fields where they would be sure to be observed by

Japanese bombers. Sometimes what appeared to be a whole flying field was constructed, with genuine anti-aircraft guns mounted to keep the attacking planes at a safe distance. At a height of a few hundred feet it was impossible to distinguish the fake planes from the genuine. Hundreds of very expensive bombs were dropped and Japanese spokesmen gleefully announced the destruction of dozens of

aeroplanes which were nothing more than bits of bamboo and paper cleverly pasted together.

A great many books have been written and many a bitter theological feud has been fought over the question of the Chinese conception of the future life and of the place which Christians designate as heaven. These theological discussions are far beyond my depth and full of terminology which I do not understand. But the ghostly department store does appear to me to present a fair picture of the other world, the dwelling-place of their deceased ancestors, the place to which they hope to go, as visualised by a very large proportion of the lower and middle class of China. It must be a very comfortable place, a *bourgeois* heaven with plenty of money, all of the most modern luxuries and conveniences and new ones being added as fast as they are invented. However, it would be impossible to say how many Chinese sincerely believe that by the act of burning these paper imitations the actual objects themselves are placed at the disposal of the ghost, though it is past all comprehension what some people of all nations will believe in matters concerning the spirits of the dead. To my mind, the burning of these ghost objects is, in the majority of cases, little more than symbolism, in no way different from the flowers which we send on the occasion of funerals or with which we decorate the graves of loved ones.

'Why do you,' I asked a Chinese friend, 'follow such a silly custom about this ghost furniture? You know

very well that these paper gadgets burn up and that is all there is to it and all you have done has been to waste your money.'

'How fashion you pay flowers on friend grave?' he retorted. 'Dead man no can smellum!'

In the care they bestow on the welfare of their ghostly ancestors the Chinese observe another funeral custom which I think is an especially happy one. On festivals and other periods given over to honouring the memory of the dead, an elaborate feast is prepared with wine, roast pork, shark's fins, fruit, and all the good things the family can afford, and is reverently placed before the family altar, arranged as enticingly as possible. Indigestible paper and bamboo form no part of this offering. It is all good, wholesome, well-cooked food and well-matured wine. Placing it before the family altar is a method of offering thanks for the blessings the family has received, which is doubtless just as sincere as the 'grace' which precedes each meal in many Christian homes. After being symbolically offered to the ghosts of ancestors the food and drink provide a jolly family feast.

There are no people more punctilious than the Chinese in observing the rites and ceremonies connected with funerals and memorials to the dead, but Chinese florists do not read the death notices in the morning papers with a view to preparing for a rush of prosperous business. With the possible exception of the Japanese, Chinese are the world's greatest purchasers

of flowers and it would be difficult to find a Chinese home where there is not either a growing plant or a sprig of blossoms at every season of the year. But they buy flowers for the living, not for the dead. To heap a grave with flowers is to them as absurd as to sprinkle it with perfume. Their expressions of condolence take on a much more practical form, for they send presents of money, not alone the worthless ghost money or the ghost furniture mentioned above, but actual cash given to the head of the bereaved family in order to help meet the funeral expenses, which are heavy in any country, and especially burdensome in China.

These cash funeral gifts are not confined to the poor and there is no suggestion of charity connected with them. The cheque or small envelope containing coins or bank notes is offered and accepted in the same spirit as a wreath of flowers would be sent and accepted under similar circumstances at home. This is the practical expression of condolence approved by Confucius about 2,500 years ago and followed ever since. It is too bad that we are so hide-bound and prejudiced in our conventions that this sensible custom cannot be adopted by us. How many times would the financial worries of a bereaved widow be lightened if sympathetic friends could have given her in cash the money they spent on flowers!

Christian missionaries have always, in my opinion, taken a rather narrow point of view regarding these

Chinese funeral practices. They look on it as a Christian act to heap the grave of a loved one with flowers or to decorate it with marble angels, but sinfully idolatrous to demonstrate the same affection by burning a few innocent paper objects or making a ceremonial exhibition of the materials for a family feast. I may be stupid about such matters but I can't see any particular difference.

And when I am buried in the hills of Soochow, near the Nine Arch Bridge, I hope my Chinese friends will, on appropriate occasions, burn a modest lot of ghostly money and furniture over my grave. And if they want to, my foreign friends are welcome to use the gravestone as a place to open the bottles of beer which are always so welcome after a hike over the Hills of the Seven Brothers.

XXII

LESSONS LEARNED AT A BULLFIGHT

THE callousness of Chinese and their apparent lack of sympathy with human suffering has been commented on by practically every foreigner who has ever visited the country, and with a varying degree of reproof, ranging from mild criticism to outspoken horror. While it is possible to bring forth a great deal of evidence of individual acts of kind-heartedness and practical expressions of sympathy with distress, the Chinese, as a race, cannot be said to be particularly

susceptible to pity, and their indifference to human suffering is certainly much greater than that to be found in other countries. If the amount of poverty, hunger and illness which will be found any day in a Chinese village were transplanted to an American community, any number of humane and charitably inclined persons would immediately busy themselves with measures of relief. That is to say, they would busy themselves unless the community happened to have as long a tradition of poverty as the Chinese village, and in that case I have an idea the American village would be no more active or liberal than the Chinese.

The presence of poverty in China is not an incident of life but a constant factor. It never occurs to a Chinese that there is any reason why a good proportion of his fellow-men should not be hungry and cold. They have been so for ages and will continue to be so long after he is dead and there is nothing he can do about it. The man who is hungry to-day will be hungry again next week even if you do give him a bowl of rice to-day. If a fellow-clansman is hungry, he must of course, be fed, but that is a family duty and is not necessarily motivated by any considerations of humanity. There are a great many benevolent institutions scattered through the country but the activities of most of them are directed towards burying the dead rather than towards preserving the lives of the living.

Foreigners who live long in China unconsciously

adopt the same point of view. We see around us so much poverty and so much obvious physical suffering that we become hardened. If we did not life would be a perpetual burden. It is only when I am taking visitors about and listening to their exclamations of horror and sympathy that I realise how hardened I have become through a quarter of a century of constant contact with distress. Hard-heartedness becomes a measure of self-protection. The wells of pity run dry.

When in New York or any other large American city, I have noted that the most persistent and apparently the most successful appeal made by the panhandler is for a dime with which to buy a cup of coffee for breakfast. A generous American is usually shocked at the idea that a man, as late as ten o'clock in the morning, has not yet had a cup of coffee, inferentially, has had no breakfast. Such an appeal would leave the most generous Chinese stone-cold. He sees no reason for concern merely because a fellow-being has not yet had his breakfast. Nor, as a matter of fact, would his heart be wrung by the appeals of a man who at midnight had had nothing to eat all day. Unless he has been born of a wealthy family and has also been fortunate enough to escape direct contact with the floods and famines which occasionally make the food supplies of the rich precarious, the chances are that he has on more than one occasion gone without food for a whole twenty-four hours and not only did not die of starvation, but suffered no ill effects. He

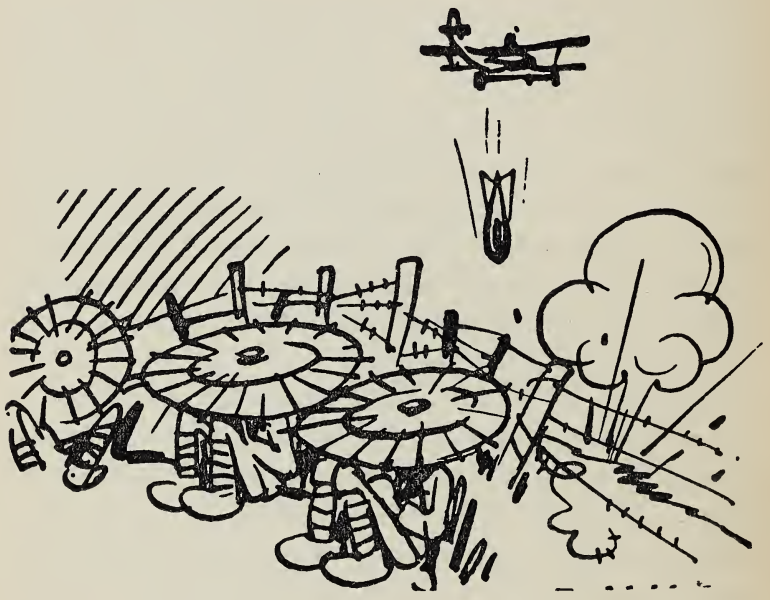
knows from experience what every doctor knows from theory: that a fast will do no one any harm and would do most people a lot of good. It is not until a panhandler is able to prove that he has not eaten anything for three or four days that he might expect to gain a little sympathy.

A Chinese takes the same practical point of view towards what appears to the foreigner to be physical suffering of every kind. They consider the matter from different standards of value. No matter in what form it may come, the Chinese never suffers the pain or discomfort the foreigner thinks he should suffer, or that the foreigner would suffer under similar circumstances. By learning to endure pain and discomfort these things cease to be of importance; and different customs set up different standards of comfort.

Shanghai, which is on the same parallel of latitude as New Orleans, enjoys a rather mild climate, but in winter the temperature often drops below the freezing point. On these occasions 99 per cent of the 60,000 ricksha coolies wear nothing more than sandals, thin cotton trousers and a cotton shirt and jacket. If it is raining a few of them may be lucky enough to have an oilskin coat or more usually a square of oilskin which they throw over their shoulders. By all foreign standards they should be suffering terribly from the cold. But if you were to give one of them a suit of woollen clothing and a pair of shoes, he would not wear them. He would be too warm in the woollen

suit and the shoes would hurt his feet. All his life he has never known of any artificial heat. He would probably sicken and die if compelled to dress like an American and live in a steam-heated apartment.

But the sight of thinly-clad coolies at work in the



rain, even of famine and flood sufferers who are dying of hunger are mild compared to the more horrible sights of human cruelty which have been all too common during the long period of Manchu rule and the protracted civil wars which followed the establishment of the Republic. During the latter period especially,

warfare was so widespread that no one could easily escape its horrors, and Chinese civil warfare in some of its physical aspects is particularly ghastly.

It is impossible for me to be shocked at evidences of Chinese callousness for the very good reason that I am callous myself to sights which sicken a visitor. I am sure I was not born that way. Indeed I remember quite distinctly the physical shock I suffered at the sight of the first decapitated head which I saw hanging by its queue from a telegraph pole in Nanking. I have a little more vague but fairly definite recollection of the next lot, a half-dozen or more in one group which I saw a month later. Since that time I have, I suppose, seen at least a hundred decapitated heads, singly and in groups, but my memory of them is very vague and there are probably a great many I have forgotten entirely.

I do remember a trip I made to Peking about fifteen years ago with a friend who had just arrived from New York. A short time before this there had been a clean-up of bandits in Shantung province, and just as breakfast was being served in the dining-car our train stopped in front of a station from which no less than twenty-one decapitated heads were in plain view, ranged along the track so as to create as much of an impression as possible, and so dissuade others from taking up the profession of banditry. I recall this incident quite distinctly not because of the twenty-one grisly heads, but because of the horror and indignation

with which my friend watched me finish a hearty breakfast for, at first sight of the heads, his appetite had disappeared entirely.

I was more than twenty-five years old when I saw my first decapitated head. If it has had the effect of making me immune to shocks at such sights, think what the effect must be on Chinese children who from their earliest years have been witnessing even more horrible sights than this!

Because throughout their history they have come into close and intimate contact with cruelty and bloodshed, Chinese demand strong meat in their popular plays and their dramatists give them plenty of blood. The plots of a great many of the dramas appear to have been devised with the idea of providing one group of players with a pretext and an opportunity to chop off the heads of most of the others.

At the first bullfight I attended in Mexico City I would, if I had been alone, have fled in horror when I saw the first horse cruelly gored by the bull. As I was the guest of some Mexican friends I had to stick it out, which I did with gradually lessening disgust, and increasing interest and excitement. By the time the sixth horse had been gored and the sixth dead bull dragged from the ring by the gay little mules, I was as keen on bullfighting as any one of the Mexicans around me. I have never talked with any other bullfight fan who did not confess the same experience.

In spite of their obvious callousness and their hard

boiled and realistic outlook on life, the fact remains that of the many deities worshipped by the Chinese, it is to the beloved Kwan Yin, the goddess of mercy, that most of the candles are burned and most urgent prayers addressed. In the 'Hall of the Lohans', which is attached to most of the principal temples and monasteries, there are about five hundred life-sized images of gods and saints. The central figure is that of Kwan Yin with a thousand arms, each arm stretched out in an appealing gesture of compassion.

As has happened in the case of a great many other characteristics of the Chinese, this callousness, which is natural and explainable, has been given picturesque exaggerations. An example which is quoted by a good many writers is the fact that Chinese seldom make any attempt to rescue people from drowning. No one of the many who have referred to this has, so far as I know, made any attempt to explain it except by setting it down to some barbaric superstition. Perhaps people who recorded these stories did not stop to think that the rescue of a drowning man is not a simple matter and that it is in China, as in other countries, the vocation of experts. In dangerous waters, such as the Yangtsze Gorges, there are men regularly employed whose sole business it is to act as life savers, and a great many people are rescued from drowning.

Curiously enough I witnessed two incidents of this sort on one short steamer trip between Nanking and Shanghai, each being a case of attempted suicide.

The first was a middle-aged man who, according to the stories of the ship's crew had lost his money and gone deeply into debt over an unlucky Mah Jongg game. He jumped off our ship and was soon hauled out by the crew of a small Chinese boat. This didn't dampen his ardour for suicide for as soon as the crew got busy rowing him back to shore he jumped in again and was rescued a second time. The rescuers took no more chances with him for they trussed him up with ropes and stowed him in the bottom of the boat. Here he still struggled to get free and complete the job of suicide, but with no success.

The other attempt occurred the following day a little further down the river, when a boy of fifteen or sixteen jumped overboard for no apparent reason except that he was lonely and homesick. He was rescued under practically the same circumstances but with much less difficulty, for once he sank in the water he lost all idea of staying there and was fished out with no difficulty and with his own active assistance. The boatman who dived in after him and the others who fished him out with a boat-hook in the seat of his trousers gave him a good spanking to make sure that he would not try the same nonsense again, and then sent him on his way.

After witnessing these two attempts at suicide and the prompt and efficient rescues, I wrote off entirely the stories I had previously discounted to the effect that Chinese would make no attempt to rescue a

drowning person. I suddenly realised that if either of these men had been my best friend it would have been impossible for me to help him because my own swimming is confined to rather timorous attempts to keep myself afloat for a few minutes in water which I trust is not out of my depth. For me to attempt to rescue a drowning man would be as futile as for one to dive after someone who had jumped from an aeroplane. The only result would be two fatalities instead of one. When you consider the fact that very few Chinese can swim and that the rescue of a drowning man is a rather hazardous undertaking even for a good swimmer, it appears to me that the reluctance of the Chinese to dive in after a drowning man is a perfectly natural one which does not need to be justified by any callousness or superstitious beliefs.

XXIII

EARNING THE DISHONEST PENNY

ANY visitor to China must be struck by the fact that so much of the conversation of foreign residents is given over to a discussion of the doings of their

servants. Most of the foreigners know, or should know, that conversation about servants is not generally approved in polite society and when it is indulged in to the exclusion of all other topics it brings conversation down to the level of what is known in America as 'back fence gossip'. However, the doings of Chinese servants are of such interest and importance to their foreign mistress, their virtues so laudable, their faults so exasperating, that she cannot resist the temptation to talk about them, even though she has read books on etiquette. The boy, the cook, the coolie, the *amah*, the chauffeur, the gardener, all come in for discussions between rubbers of bridge and everything they have done or said, or failed to do, is the subject of minute discussion.

In the minds of the average foreign residents of the country, China is truly a land of servants. Many of them spend a lifetime in China without ever coming into intimate contact with any Chinese except their own servants and the servants of their friends. The mental impression of the Chinese which they carry with them to their graves is in some respects as inaccurate as the picture a visitor to America might conceive if he spent a lifetime here and his contact was confined to Pullman porters. His picture would doubtless be a pleasant one but it would not be accurate or complete. Some foreigners living in China do establish other contacts, some even learn the difficult language, but in the main the China which the

foreigners know and talk about and write about is the China of the servant, the amiable boy with the long white gown. Even though he desired to do so the foreign resident could not escape his presence or his influence. I have certainly not done so. I am proud of my wide circle of Chinese friends, but the Chinese whom I know best of all is Ching, who brought my morning cup of tea, took care of me and unobtrusively but effectively bossed me and imposed on me for many years. And any satisfaction I might feel in the fact that I know him so well is somewhat discounted by the fact that I know that he knows me very much better.

No matter how a conversation about servants starts it is only a question of time, and usually a very short time, before it narrows down to the subject of 'squeeze', and remains there; for it is a subject on which every resident of China can discourse at length and recount personal experiences by the hour. Since this is a subject of such voluminous conversation and falls within the experience of everyone who lives in China – even for a few weeks – it is natural that it should be mentioned in most books that are written about the country.

'Squeeze' is a China Coast or *pidgin* English word for the illicit profit or gain made by means of any transaction, but it is most commonly used to describe the petty transactions of servants. It is not the opportunist pilfering of the casual thief who sees a stray

object lying about and makes away with it. On the contrary, it is a steady day by day, almost hour by hour, accumulation of illicit gains by every servant in the house, which goes on under your own eyes and often with your full knowledge though seldom with your full consent. Every resident of China who has taken the trouble to inquire into the matter knows what the system is.

First there is the matter of commissions. The boy demands and without question receives from the grocer or 'compradore shop', as it is called in China, a commission, usually 5 per cent on all supplies purchased. This he must divide with the coolie by an arrangement worked out between them. The usual division is that the boy keeps the 'squeeze' on all the articles he serves, that is to say wines, cigarettes, shaving soap, etc., while the coolie gets the emoluments which go with brass and boot polish, and laundry soap. Often that is as far as their 'squeeze' goes. The cook gets the same percentage on all food products bought, but his opportunities for profit by means of short weight, fictitious prices and false invoices concocted by collusion with the market men are boundless. No matter what his salary may be, the cook is always the aristocrat of the household and puts on airs and takes liberties which the other servants would never dream of.

Some other employees are not so fortunate. One reason why chauffeurs are the highest paid of all

servants, in spite of the fact that their work is the easiest, is that the wealthy but hard-hearted oil companies pay them no commissions on either oil or petrol. Most garages, I am sorry to say, do pay them a commission on repairs and if a new car is bought, the chauffeur expects and receives from the foreign dealer a rather handsome cash present. But repairs and the purchase of new cars are not everyday events and the chauffeurs have worked out a system which will give them a certain regular monthly 'squeeze'.

Every chauffeur must have a certain equipment in order to take care of the car – feather dusters, chamois skins, metal polish, altogether a list of seven or eight items, and a total cost for a complete assortment runs to about Ch $13. All these items, in theory, are either used up or worn out once a month and therefore require replenishing. Just why a tin of metal polish should last exactly one month, no more and no less, I do not pretend to say, but I know that in a period of ownership of cars extending over about twenty years I have always bought exactly twelve tins of metal polish a year and each tin has been exhausted on the last day of the month. The same has been true of the feather dusters, which start out bravely on the first of every month but are damaged beyond either usefulness or repair by the end.

That was formerly true of the chamois skin, the most expensive part of the equipment. But after I

talked the matter over with the chauffeur, pointing out that the depression in America had cut into my profits, he volunteered to do what he could in the matter of making a chamois skin last a little longer, though he was very doubtful about the matter. But he did try and appeared to be as surprised as he was delighted when he managed to make the chamois last two months. Thereafter we settled down to a basis of a new chamois skin every two months while all other supplies were replenished monthly. Under this schedule my expenses were Ch $13.45 in the chamois skin months and Ch $6.75 in the other months. The arrangement was very satisfactory to both of us and was not changed even when the old chauffeur was replaced by a new one.

The gardener also needs equipment, but his opportunities for 'squeeze' are very limited. His principal gardening tool, the heavy Chinese hoe, will last a lifetime. On the other hand the broom with which he sweeps the lawn and the bamboo basket into which the refuse is swept are invariably worn out, like the chauffeur's feather duster, on the last day of every month. The elements stay not, nor do they hasten the decline of these two humble objects.

Nor does wear and tear have anything to do with it. At various times I have occupied places with (1) a lawn big enough for two tennis courts (2) a lawn just big enough for a croquet ground and (3) one that covered only a couple of dozen square yards. In each

of these places and at all seasons of the year the basket and the broom went into simultaneous dissolution at the end of each month. Watering-cans, which are hand-made of heavy galvanised iron, also come to an early end if the gardener's ideas are allowed to prevail. I once employed a gardener who was a very devout Catholic, and he never allowed me to forget the fact. He talked to me about it so much that I challenged him to prove the sincerity of his faith by the care he bestowed on my watering-cans, and much to my surprise he accepted my challenge. Thereafter I had great delight in arousing the jealousy and envy of my fellow gardening enthusiasts by displaying a pair of watering-pots which had been in daily use for a year or more and were still quite serviceable.

Cook, boy and coolie usually make daily levies on any stores of food in the house. When the sugar bowl is replenished a few lumps go into the private stores of the cook or the boy, or both of them. If the coolie tried to participate in this division of spoils he would probably get a sharp reprimand from the other two, for sugar lies outside his province. The cook piously assures himself that he might eat the sugar, which is what some cooks do. Instead he accumulates it lump by lump until he has a pound and by an easy manipulation of the accounts I buy my own sugar back again.

The same procedure is followed with a wide variety of other supplies. In a well-ordered household all these details as to the number of pounds of pilfered

flour, boxes of matches, number of brooms, dustpans, etc., which are considered necessary and allowable, are finally ironed out and there need be no further difficulty on that score. In our establishment the flour quota was twenty-five pounds per month. It was that when orders of the doctor severely restricted the consumption of pastry and starchy foods and it did not change when the doctor became more lenient, for the cook developed such ability as a baker that we cut out the regular bakeshop supplies. The consumption of matches is also a fixed quantity. I once figured out that a match is consumed in our house every fifteen minutes the year round. This bears no conceivable relation to the number of fires or cigarettes that are lighted, nor is it materially affected by prolonged holiday trips. Old custom has established a certain consumption and nothing short of an economic revolution in the household can change it.

A great many foreigners foolishly assume that this system was invented especially for their exploitation and that they alone are the sufferers. But the procedure was in existence for centuries before any foreigner ever learned the luxury of attendance by a Chinese servant, and the system is in a way more firmly entrenched in Chinese than in foreign households. It is certainly carried on there with less fuss and bother because the Chinese householder accepts it without question while the foreigner occasionally blows up about it and charges one or all of his servants

with dishonesty, deceit, ingratitude and every other appropriate fault he can think of.

When the servant has accusations of this sort hurled at him he is as conscious of a sense of injustice as is

possible for one who has always looked on injustice as one of the necessary conditions of life. He is sincere when he protests his honesty for, according to his code he is honest. If he denies collecting the commissions and levying on the sugar and the tea, it is because denial is his only course of defence, for he does not

dare tell the truth. Even if he had the wit to explain his ideas of the ethics of the case, the foreign master would not have the sense to understand it.

The whole question, from an ethical point of view, goes back to the clan system of China, a system under which the interests of the individual are submerged with that of the clan, and he shares the prosperity or the adversity of his relatives. Now when a Chinese servant is employed by a foreigner the latter usually makes it quite clear that the servant is on trial and it never occurs to him that he also is on trial and that if he fails to live up to the servant's standard of what a master should be, the servant will find a berth elsewhere.

After the period of mutual trial is completed and the employment relationship becomes permanent the servant elects himself a member of the master's clan, with all the assets and liabilities involved. That he should be more alert about sharing the assets than the liabilities is quite natural. In the sharing of assets, the master's expenditures provide a fairly accurate barometer. If his consumption of such things as whisky, gin and cigarettes should go up, there is no reason why the servant's comparatively small perquisite should not also go up, because it certainly goes down when the consumption of these and other articles declines. In so far as Chinese are logical, which some say is not very far, that is irresistible logic.

While evidence that the servant shares in the prosperity of his master is apparent and greatly publicised, evidence that he shares the adversity of the clan of his adoption is not so obvious. It is nevertheless true, and I have personally known of a number of cases where an old employer has fallen on evil days, has been unable to pay his servants and they have remained with him without pay and, in some cases, even contributed to his support.

XXIV

BEGGARS

VISITORS to China usually have a lot to say about the poverty of the people as shown by the presence

of beggars. This poverty is apparent everywhere, shameless and unconcealed, obvious to the most casual observer and usually so inexpressibly shocking to the newcomer that he flounders about for words with which to describe it. The result has been many stories which are in the main entirely correct as to facts but entirely wrong as to conclusions. I have never tried it but think I could possibly write a very moving narrative of the poverty and sufferings of the Chinese beggars; but if my story had art enough to move anyone to tears I would not be able to share them. That is doubtless because in my twenty-five years in China I have come in contact with so much poverty that I have become calloused and hardened and my finer feelings are blunted so far as poverty is concerned.

In fact my feelings are blunted to the point of complete insensibility to the sufferings of the Chinese beggars. At any rate that is what the average tourist would think if he went on a tour with me through a Chinese city and saw me stoically withstand the wailings of a beggar who was apparently starving to death, but whose life could be saved at a cost no greater than the price of a couple of good cigarettes. I keep the price of the cigarettes not because I am hard-hearted or unsympathetic but because I know that wailing and having the appearance of being about to starve to death is a part of the stock in trade of every Chinese beggar. He sets himself out to be shocking and does a very thorough job of it. However it doesn't

fool anyone but the tourists and the newcomer. To us tough old China hands the beggars merely provide local colour which we could quite cheerfully dispense with, but decline to get steamed up about.

A Chinese is always a good showman and no matter what he does he is able to dramatise himself quite effectively. In the hands of the Chinese shopkeeper even such a prosaic matter as measuring out a bushel of rice becomes a work of art. By his careful measuring of the grain he manages to impress on everyone the value of the commodity with which he is dealing, and then by gaily tossing in a few extra spoonfuls shows the liberality of his treatment of customers.

The ricksha coolie always pats the cushion on the seat reassuringly to show how soft and comfortable it is. In hot weather he will turn the cushion over with the idea that the under side has not been exposed to the sun and so is cooler. There is a lot of exceptionally good Hollywood talent going to waste in China. And of all the showmen, none exceeds the beggar in talent. It is his business in life to arouse pity and he does this very effectively, making clever use of every bit of stage property that comes to his hand. Only an artist in his particular line could produce such rags as he wears. It would not be accomplished by ordinary disintegration coming about through natural causes; nor could any disease known to medical science create the sores which decorate his limbs. There is a story, rather generally believed, that these sores are detachable

and are taken off in the evening when the day's work is done.

One of the most successful beggars I ever knew was a woman who operated on the Garden Bridge which is a centre of traffic in Shanghai. Her stage property was a small child whom she hugged in her arms while pleading for coppers with which to buy food for the infant and so prolong its life for another day. I suppose the child was really hungry most of the time for she had to keep it from getting fat in order to avoid spoiling the stage effect. But there was never any danger of it starving, for she rented the child and had to pay the mother a good share of her earnings. Usually the child slept through the performance, but sometimes it wakened and cried, which added to the effect, except to those observant enough to note that a starving child could not cry so lustily.

The device was a very effective one but the difficulty was that with the passing of time the natural growth of the child made it too heavy to carry about, and so a smaller one had to be procured every few years. Over a period of about ten years I saw her use five different infants. At length this enterprising and hard-working beggar died of what might be called 'high living', for she smoked more opium than was good for her and so passed out of the picture. During her lifetime police respected her proprietary rights to this particular racket and did not interfere with her but they have seen to it that she has no successor. The

sight was too harrowing for the unsophisticated eyes of tourists.

In all large cities and in many smaller ones, begging is a highly-organised profession with a head of the beggars guild who directs all operations, aided by many lieutenants. Each night the beggars return to the huts provided for them and there the takings of the day are divided. Just what the method of division is remains a secret of the craft, but many head beggars are known to be wealthy, own real estate and have money in the bank. I understand, however, that the division is a fair one. The head beggar is content with small profits and a big turnover, and if a beggar should fall on a period of adversity in which his takings are small, the head beggar may allow him to keep all for himself.

Although the beggar chief enjoys very arbitrary powers he does not abuse them and is a benevolent despot. His profits and powers are measured by the number of henchmen he can control and he tries to keep them as contented as possible. He does not depend on adversity to create beggars, but actually recruits them, sending out agents who point out to the aged or the decrepit the comforts and freedom from care which a beggar enjoys and the steady income which is assured by a minimum of effort. Begging is obviously much easier than pulling a ricksha, especially if one suffers from rheumatism. Recruiting is not easy but some unfortunates agree to give up work and

join the fraternity. The recruit is given a period of training and apprenticeship during which he is lodged and fed at the expense of the guild.

When he finally completes his apprenticeship and becomes what might be called a journeyman beggar, the recruit is allotted a certain district in which to build up his own clientele. The word is used advisedly, for each Chinese household or shop has a fixed allowance for the beggars who call at regular intervals to collect it. Just what this allowance shall be, and how often it is to be paid, is clearly understood so that there are no arguments or misunderstandings. With this system properly worked out, the income of the beggar is about as fixed and dependable as any income can well be. And occasionally there is a wonderful windfall as when some soft-hearted tourists are moved to a spectacular and highly impractical act of charity.

When the currency of China was reformed a few years ago there was a noticeable decrease in the number of beggars to be seen on the streets of Shanghai, though actually there were just as many beggars as before. The only difference was that with the larger monetary units they had fewer calls to make on their clients. Twenty years ago the thin copper cash, of infinitesimal value, was in general circulation. This was the measure of contributions to beggars – residents giving one cash, small shops two or three cash, big shops ten cash, etc. It required a great many contributions to total up to a satisfactory income and the beggars

were on the streets daily. Gradually the cash disappeared, being replaced by a copper coin worth about ten times as much. This necessitated a readjustment in the frequency of visits, for while householders didn't mind giving away a few cash every day they were naturally more particular about giving away the more valuable coppers. The net result of the complete replacement of the old coppers by a coin of still higher value would eventually mean that the Chinese beggars would work even less but without impairment of income.

Beggars come to depend on the regular contributions from their clients, and when anything happens to disturb them they are naturally quite upset and will usually kick up a devil of a row about it. A single gift to a beggar is an invitation to him to insist on another. With a second gift he assumes that you have become a part of his regular clientele and he groans at your injustice if the third and subsequent gifts are not forthcoming. An English journalist of Peiping had, for many years, made a contribution every Sunday morning to a group of beggars who lived in his neighbourhood. He went home on a six months' visit and on his return his beggars all called on him, not to ask for a resumption of the dole, but to collect the back pay that was coming to them.

I have never had a demand quite so definite as that, but on a number of occasions I have returned to Shanghai from brief trips and found that certain small

financial adjustments were necessary before I could re-establish friendly relationships with beggars to whom I had been in the habit of giving small sums. These financial adjustments are easily made and, I think, quite worth while. If you cannot live in a state of mutual tolerance with your fellow-men who are beggars, what hope is there for humanity?

On the occasion of a funeral or marriage or the opening of a new shop, the local beggars' guild expects and usually receives a very substantial contribution. This is all privately arranged by the head of the guild who collects the money in one lump sum. Thus the funeral can be observed, the wedding celebrated or the shop opened amid surroundings of apparent prosperity, for not a beggar will be seen in the neighbourhood. It is unthinkable that on occasions like this no arrangement would be concluded with the beggars, but if this were neglected, we may be sure that every beggar in the surrounding country would be present, constituting a company of uninvited and very troublesome guests.

Professional Chinese beggars look with considerable enmity on those who are driven to solicit alms because of flood or famine or some other calamity. This is a form of competition which they regard as distinctly unfair; indeed their attitude is very much like that of the trade union member towards the open shop worker, and they adopt rather severe measures to prevent this menace to their peace and prosperity. The poor unfortunate who turns to begging merely because he is

starving is very likely to be set upon by the guild beggars and given a sound beating.

It is always easy to tell a casual unfortunate from the professional beggar. He does not go from house to house soliciting alms for if he did it would be only a matter of time until he encountered some scout from the beggars' guild and he would be sent on his way with a few bruises. Instead he selects a spot on the Bund, which is Shanghai's principal street, and on the wide pavement writes the brief story of his misfortunes. If he cannot write, which is frequently the case, he gets some charitable scholar to write his appeal for him. It gives his name and birthplace, explains the reason for his need of help.

He usually wants only enough money to get to some other place and the amount needed may be mentioned. Then he sits down beside this appeal, sometimes with his wife and children. The bundle containing all his personal belongings is not large enough to obstruct traffic. The police look on him with a lenient eye. As Chinese pass by they read the appeal and a fair proportion of them toss coppers on the pavement. He lets them lie there until the quota has been reached, when he collects the coins, picks up his bundle and his family and goes on his way. His brief adventure into the soliciting of alms has been accomplished with dignity and no loss of self-respect.

Of a different class – a class all to themselves – are the precocious youngsters who combine begging with

a certain amount of showmanship. On the docks small boys turn cartwheels until you get dizzy looking at them. They speak in terms of dollars professing to scorn all smaller coins, though none are refused. Sometimes a tourist actually gives them a dollar. These young circus performers never heard anything about the Barnum theory of a sucker being born every minute, but they do know that there is one on almost every ship.

On the business streets a little girl will walk up to you, and before you know what has happened, slip a flower into your buttonhole. Most tourists have worn a horse collar of *leis* at Honolulu and they think that this bestowal of a nosegay is just another one of those charming native customs which inexperienced travellers always find so intriguing. Not to be outdone in courtesy, they pay the saucy little racketeer fifty times what the flowers are worth.

More deserving of charitable coins are the little girls who walk backwards in front of you, juggling three sticks and keeping a wary eye out for the police. There must be a perennial supply of these little girls for I have seen them for a quarter of a century and they have always been the same age. Until a decade ago their patter was always the same:

'No got papa. No got mama. No got chow chow!'

They always tried to make this announcement of their orphan state and their hunger as lugubrious as possible but always failed for they are a cheery tribe

and nothing can hide the merry twinkle in their eyes. The appeal for coins was later changed, for the American Marines stationed in Shanghai devoted a lot of attention to the reform of many local customs. Now when the little juggler gets the attention of a couple who are obviously tourists, she says:

'Hello papa! Hello mama! Your baby very hungry!'

XXV

NAUGHTY WORDS FROM SCHOLARLY LIPS

WHILE Chinese in the normal intercourse with each other observe the greatest courtesy, they go to the other extreme once the restraints of polite behaviour are thrown aside. Then the foulness of the language, the depth of the insults hurled back and forth can find few parallels in any other language. A couple of women who have had a disagreement over some trivial matter will entertain the neighbourhood for hours with the picturesque but unprintable phrases

that they fling at each other. Each accuses the other of every moral depravity which comes to mind, and the category contains many lurid items. Having exhausted a discussion of each other's iniquities and personal habits, they then take up a consideration of relatives, who are befouled in every imaginable way. This often continues until one or both are physically exhausted.

This use of foul language is not confined to the lower classes but extends to all. The courtly and highly-educated scholar who is famous for his dainty sonnets will in a moment of anger use, with obvious familiarity, words and phrases of shocking filthiness. One cannot imagine Whittier or Longfellow using the language of pimps and prostitutes but the scholarly gentleman of China will descend to those depths as often as he loses his temper.

This is partly but not entirely due to the frankness of the language. We have a number of words, especially in connection with the bodily functions which all know and understand, but they are tabu and no one except the vulgar ever speaks them. Chinese tabus are not so strict and, while inoffensive synonyms have been invented for vulgar words, they are not so generally used. However, this accounts for but a small part of the vulgarity of common speech, which rises to unbelievable heights, or perhaps it would be better to say sinks to unbelievable depths, in moments of passionate anger.

Nor is vulgarity confined to language alone. It is possible to convey the most deadly insults by means of a variety of gestures. One summer afternoon when I had nothing to do but wait for a delayed train, a railway porter taught me no less than thirty different gestures,

every one of which would have meant, in Texas, a case of more or less justifiable homicide. He assured me that this did not by any means exhaust his repertoire.

About seventy years ago an American missionary made a collection of curses which were in daily use in

Foochow. To express the earnest hope that one's adversary would die of smallpox or cholera was one of the mildest and least shocking. Among the others collected by the missionary were the following:

May you be cut in pieces and be fried in boiling oil!

May your tongue be cut out!

May all your children die!

May the crows pick out your eyes!

May your corpse be eaten by dogs!

May your whole family be jammed into one coffin!

May your family be too poor to bury you and throw your corpse to the hogs!

Accompanying these imprecations there are charges and accusations against the moral character of the other as well as his immediate and remote ancestors. To call one a 'turtle's egg' is probably the most common. While this picturesque epithet may appear harmless to the uninitiated, it is full of insulting implications, for to the Chinese the most shocking and degrading example of sexual perversion is provided by the female turtle and her lecherous relations with a snake. In quoting these and other examples I have cautiously followed the example of the missionary authority and have mentioned only those which are printable so that they represent a degree of restraint and refinement not to be found in the original.

As a typical bit of Chinese repartee, both unrestrained and unrefined, I can do no better than quote from the dialogue in a spirited passage in *The Lucky*

Pearl, a Chinese play which has enjoyed great popularity for at least a thousand years. After a rather mild argument the following conversation takes place:

'*Ting Lang*: You talk pretty big. What is your name, anyway?

'*Li Chun*: I am the dragon that confuses the rivers.

'*Ting Lang*: You mean you are a stinking bug in a ball of dung.

'*Li Chun*: Just wait and I'll give you a walloping, you eight days spawn of a turtle.

'*Ni*: Fall back and I'll gouge out your eyes and boil them in liquor. I'll flay your hide and mix it with dog skin to make a plaster for carbuncles.

'*Ting Lang*: What kind of a louse in mongrel's hair are you?

'*Ni*: Look out for a thrashing, you mouldy spawn of a turtle.'

Some missionary observers have suggested that this use of foul language and these really terrible curses are used as unthinkingly as mild curses and technical blasphemy are used in other countries, especially in America. Many a man may tell his friend to go to the devil without either of them looking on it as anything more than a jocular and slightly ironical remark. This seems to me to be not only a charitable but a logical view to take of the matter. Certainly the most bitter curses and the foulest abuse and the most insulting accusations may be shouted at the street corner for all to hear, but seldom do matters go any

farther. When I first came to China I wasted a lot of time listening to street brawls which, by the code prevailing in almost any other country, were certain to result in attempted manslaughter. In those days all Chinese wore queues and occasionally one of the contestants, whose vocabulary was not so rich as the other, would become so exasperated that he would yank the other's queue. Sometimes each one grabbed a queue and tugged with all his might but that is as far as matters ever went.

When arguments reached that dangerous stage the peacemakers who are always to be found in any Chinese crowd would forgo any further enjoyment of the show and exhort both parties to the controversy to forget all that had been said and to bear no grudges, advice which was always taken, though with a show of reluctance on each side and a parting shot from each to show that though the fight was a draw he was still in the ring.

With the universal cutting of queues this convenient and harmless method of committing bodily assault is no longer available, so now in the heat of controversy one party to the quarrel may give the other a slight shove, just like an angry small boy who does not know how to use his fists. Here again the peacemakers step in and harmony is restored. The advice to forget what has been said and to harbour no grudges must be sincerely followed for the two who have been so loudly and expertly insulting each other meet as

good friends, or at least without enmity, a few days later.

If the code which provides that an insult must be avenged by a blow prevailed in China there would at all times be a very large proportion of the people wearing black eyes and bloody noses. And if there were general adoption of the code which provides for sterner vengeance against one who insults a father or mother, China would not be the land of personal peace which it now is and has always been, for it would be ridden by a million deadly feuds. There are very few Chinese who have not at one time or another been compelled to listen to the most deadly insults to his father and mother, yet the duties of filial piety have never, so far as I know, constrained him to punch the jaw of the insulter, a procedure which is more or less compulsory according to the code in other countries.

On the other hand the Chinese are quite capable of fights to the death, either in individual personal combats or in the form of bitterly contested clan feuds if the controversy concerns some practical matter which they think worth fighting about. Whole villages will fight, with a great deal of bloodshed and some fatalities, over the matter of water rights. Often so many neighbouring villages become involved that the whole countryside is in an uproar and troops have to be called out to restore peace. Individual personal combats are usually over money, directly or indirectly.

Crimes of passion do not exist. Chinese have not become romantic enough to kill each other over women and it will take a good many more generations of the influence of sentimental movies before they become that way – if they ever do.

It is a very fortunate thing that few foreigners living in China know the language well enough to understand when they are being insulted, for the smiling ricksha coolie, the urbane houseboy, the accommodating shop assistant, will all refer to the foreigner in the latter's presence in terms that are unprintable, secure in the knowledge that the foreigner does not understand.

A few years ago one of my friends happened to pause in front of a Shanghai shop just as a dignified foreign lady came out, preceded by a shop assistant who was carrying her parcels. As he stepped on to the pavement the assistant called out to the waiting chauffeur:

'Open the door, you lazy turtle egg. Here comes the fat bitch.'

The lady smiled, thanked the assistant and tipped him.

XXVI

THE FOLLY OF UNTIMELY DEATH

UNTIL they put up their resolute defence against the Japanese invasion Chinese were generally credited with being a race of physical cowards. It may be because of this that the word *yellow* has in a way become a synonym for cowardice and that in many places to call a man 'yellow' carries a humiliating if not an insulting implication.

According to the generally accepted Occidental idea of courage, this appraisal is a fair one in spite of the fact that Chinese history is full of stories of bravery and heroism and everyday life is not without heroic incidents. But Chinese do not surround either physical or moral bravery with the halo which has been placed around it in other countries, and they are particularly lacking in appreciation for bravado and

heroics, which they find out of place except on the stage. The Chinese counterpart of Nathan Hale would not become a national hero but would more probably be looked on merely as an unsuccessful spy who was stupid enough to get caught. Many other national heroes would suffer the same fate at the hands of Chinese who are tolerant in their attitude towards the actions of their fellow-men but hard-boiled in their appraisal of character.

There was a time, before and during the Confucian period, when the border states of the Chow confederation were emerging from barbarism and savagery, when bravery for the sake of bravery was highly esteemed. Men killed each other freely, risked their own lives recklessly and did a lot of talking about it. In China as elsewhere throughout history physical bravery and feats of strength have always been provocative of wine-shop conversation. The colleagues of the father of Confucius were a roistering crew who risked their lives for no apparent reason except to have something to brag about in the event that they survived – prototypes of the bad men of the 'Wild West' who were motivated by the same cruel impulses and vain ambitions several thousand years later. Indeed the Texas gunman was rather colourless and cowardly compared with these picturesque bullies of ancient Chinese history.

As Chinese civilisation spread and developed, men found many other ways of distinguishing themselves

than by cracking the bones or slitting the throats of their enemies. As poets and artists became famous, the man who was only strong and brave found himself a sadly discounted hero and the public mildly admired the bravery of the man who risked death, but laughed at the obvious folly of courting death unnecessarily.

That, I think, is the typical Chinese attitude, one which has stripped professional bravery of all its tinsel and falseness and brought it down to a formula something like the following:

'Die if you must, but only if you must.'

Much as they treasure the plaudits of posterity, Chinese do not willingly die for the academic purpose of becoming heroes. An interesting study in contrasts is found between the Texas man who would ride all night to shoot things out with the man who had threatened to shoot him, and the Chinese who under similar circumstances would hie himself to some safe spot and employ a bunch of armed guards for protection. From the Texas point of view the Chinese is a coward; from the Chinese point of view the Texan is not only a barbarian and an ass, but an unmitigated fool.

China has always been rich in opportunities for heroism. It is but a slight exaggeration to say that the life of every wealthy Chinese is in constant danger. Kidnapping is a very active, and in a lamentably large number of cases, a profitable occupation. But the Chinese kidnappers do not, like their American

prototypes, confine their activities to children. A great many children are kidnapped, some held for ransom, some sold into slavery and some lucky boys adopted by the bandits and pirates who are without sons, and so are well cared for and get an early start in the professions of their foster parents.

But the gentry who kidnap children constitute the small fry of the bandit and pirate fraternity, for the big shots go after the fat bankers, proprietors of silk and silver shops. The reason is as sound and logical as the law of supply and demand. The American kidnapper reasons quite correctly that the most profitable enterprise is that of kidnapping children because no grief is quite so poignant as that suffered by the parents of a kidnapped child. The Chinese kidnapper, on the other hand, knows that no suffering can be greater than that borne by the children and grandchildren of an old gentleman, and therefore the chances of an early and generous arrangement regarding the payment of ransom are greatly increased.

It would be unfair to give the impression that Chinese parents are in any way more indifferent to the fate of their children than are parents of any other nationality. The problem might be presented in terms of mathematical proportions. A kidnapped child can have but two parents with limited financial resources. An old gentleman who has fallen into the clutches of villains may have half a dozen sons and a flock of grandchildren, so that instead of two

people being primarily interested in the relief of the captive there may be several dozen.

The result of all this is that every wealthy Chinese knows that there are at all times one or more desperate gangs of kidnappers who will seize and hold him for ransom at the first convenient opportunity. The newspapers publish frequent accounts of these episodes and there are many others which not only never get into the newspapers but never come to police notice because the victim is captured and the ransom money paid without any dangerous fuss and bother.

Many are the devices and subterfuges adopted to foil the kidnappers. All evidence of wealth is carefully concealed and the wealthy man lives as anonymously as possible. One may search in vain through the Shanghai telephone directory for the names and addresses of wealthy Chinese residents. All have telephones but they are listed in the directory simply as Mr. Wu, Mr. Wong, or Mr. Chow, thereby achieving an anonymity the same as would be achieved by a similar listing of Smith, Brown or Jones in any big city at home.

No one but intimate friends and business associates ever knows the telephone number of a wealthy Chinese. If the name of one should be found in the book, the chances are that it has been put there as a decoy, that the rich man does not live at the address given but in quite a different part of town and that the phone

number and address is that of a guard he has employed to foil the kidnappers. Those who can afford it live in seclusion, surrounded by servants and armed guards. Others who are not so fortunate, have to travel back and forth from home to office. Many heavily armed Russians, political exiles from Soviet Russia, find employment as escorts for their motor-cars. A favourite device of bold kidnappers is to shoot guards and chauffeurs and drive the victim away in his own car. In order to avoid this bullet-proof glass is generally used. Shanghai probably leads the world in the proportion of limousines with this equipment. It is in fact a kind of insignia of wealth, and gossips say that some Chinese so notoriously poor that a self-respecting kidnapper wouldn't waste any time on them ride around ostentatiously enclosed in bullet-proof glass, which is most uncomfortable in mid-summer.

A few years ago the chauffeur of a wealthy Chinese fixed up a secret switch on his master's car whereby the ignition could be cut off, thereby bringing the car to a stop. Kidnappers at the point of a gun drove the chauffeur from the car and started away with their victim. The latter waited until the car reached a busy corner on which a traffic policeman was stationed. Then he turned the switch and the car stopped, causing a traffic jam which the policeman rushed over to investigate and the kidnappers were captured. After that so many cars were provided

with similar equipment that kidnappers had to change their method and they now operate with their own cars, or rather cars which are stolen for the occasion.

This necessity which compels them to conceal evidences of their wealth is very repugnant to the Chinese, whose desire is always to make the best showing possible and who would, if it were safe to do so, advertise their prosperity to the world. A popular Chinese proverb is to the effect that no one puts on his best clothes in order to go walking in the dark. The inference is that one should put on his most prosperous appearance, which is what all Chinese would do except when that procedure is dangerous. This fear of kidnappers is also probably the greatest handicap to the development of the motor-car business. The number of privately owned motor-cars in China would doubtless be quadrupled were it not for the fear that ownership of a car would indubitably peg the owner as a man of wealth, readily identify him, and make him an easy victim of kidnappers and bandits.

This desire to appear poor and conceal one's wealth once gave me a very valuable employee who worked at a ridiculously low wage. He had been the manager – and the very successful manager – of a bank in Shanghai, when kidnappers attempted to capture him, and although the attempt was a failure, he was so thoroughly frightened that he determined to remould his whole life into a pattern of protective coloration.

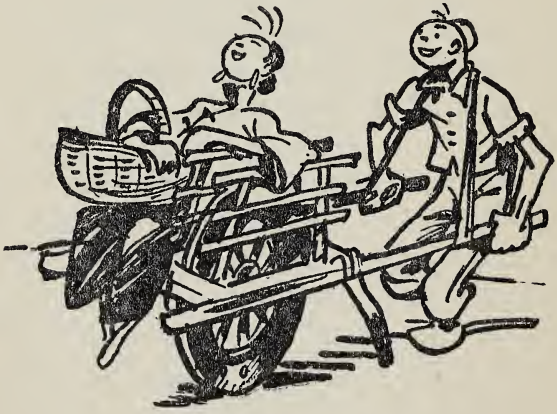
He gave out stories of huge losses in the stock market, gambled recklessly at Mah Jongg and when he lost money he did so with as much publicity as possible. Then he resigned his position in the bank but created the impression that he had been discharged, and began wearing threadbare clothing.

Now 'Fatty', as he was for obvious reasons known to his intimates, was wealthy enough to have bought himself a private castle, hired a flock of servants and armed guards and thumbed his nose at all the kidnappers in the country. But he was a companionable, talkative chap who loved the company of his fellowmen. So he looked about for an occupation which would fit into the new characterisation of himself and enable him to travel about with a certain amount of freedom and security. Fortunately for me he decided that if he were on the payroll of the little newspaper I was conducting, no one could possibly suspect him of being more than a miserable underpaid wage slave.

He told me of his plan at a Chinese feast of the type that millionaires give, and went to work for me at a wage the average American office boy would scorn. His job was to solicit advertising and he was eminently successful, for out of an eagerness to play his part rather than zeal for his work, he harassed all his wealthy friends. As he brought in more and more business I grew ashamed of the miserable salary, but he refused to consider the idea of an increase for fear

that exaggerated stories might get about. He was a bonanza not only to me but to all the young foreigners on the paper for he was an untiring host at dinner-parties which could be clandestinely conducted. As a souvenir of this strange employee my wife has a piece of jade, a present from him, which represented several months' salary. If I had had several more employees like him, I might have put the paper on a paying basis.

I presume that from the Western point of view he was an arrant coward; from the Chinese point of view he was a very wise man. The kidnappers never bothered him and he died a natural death.



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